

'Arabs should be jealous of euro'

RYADH (AFP) — The launch of Europe's first-ever common currency, the euro, marks a new stage in the continent's unification and should be viewed jealously by Arabs who are unable to unify themselves, a Saudi daily said Saturday. "With the euro, Europe has unified," the Al Madina newspaper said. "As Arabs... we are a little jealous of what others have managed to achieve and we have not, and regret the Arab Nation has become... which tears itself apart for the expense of all that might unify it," said the daily. Like the rest of the Saudi media, generally reflects the government's views. Numerous political and territorial conflicts have marred relations within the Arab World since the Arab League was created in 1945 in a bid for greater unity and common policies. Most recently member states have been unable to agree on the holding of a summit to discuss the Iraq crisis following U.S.-British air and missile attacks.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية والرأي

Volume 24 Number 7034

AMMAN SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 1999, RAMADAN 16, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Paper accuses Saddam Hussein of killing 5,000 Egyptians

CAIRO (AP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is responsible for the death of more than 5,000 Egyptians in 1983, a government-run newspaper said Saturday. In an unusual two-page editorial, Al-Ahram said Saddam should be tried in an international court. The allegation is the latest salvo in the war of words that erupted between Iraq and Egypt last week when Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak accused Saddam of provoking the U.S.-British airstrikes against Iraq on Dec. 16-19 (see page 2 story).

U.N. says second chartered plane downed in Angola

LUANDA (R) — The United Nations observer mission in Angola said on Saturday a second U.N.-chartered aircraft had been shot down in the central region of the country. A U.N. spokesman said the aircraft had been carrying seven U.N. workers to Luanda from the central city of Huambo, scene of fierce fighting between government troops and the rebel UNITA movement.

Britons can bet on streakers, Clinton and queen

LONDON (R) — Britons were offered a chance on Saturday to make a string of off-beat New Year bets — from Queen Elizabeth abdicating to a streaker enlivening parliament. Bookmaker William Hill, pandering to the British penchant for quirky bets, offered odds of 25-1 that the monarch would step down. Her son Charles marrying ex-wife Tiggy Legge-Bourke was a 100-1 shot. A streaker in the House of Commons was rated a 16-1 probability while a divorce for President Clinton was offered as a 10-1 wager.

Saudi man beats up doctor over daughter's death

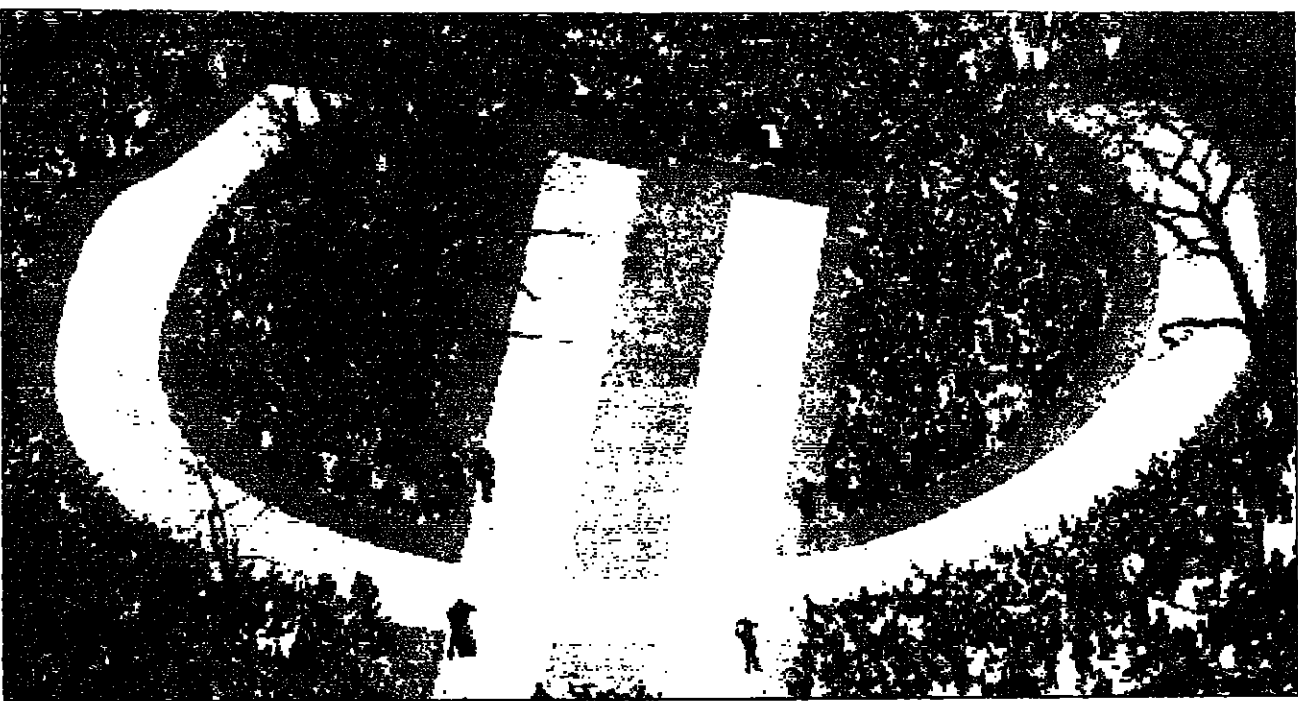
RYADH (AFP) — A Saudi national beat up a doctor here after his daughter died of a snake bite, the Al-Bilad daily reported Saturday. The doctor tried to explain to the father that his daughter had died before she was admitted to hospital, but he refused to believe this and accused the physician of gross negligence. The battered doctor has registered a complaint with local police in the Southwest of the kingdom and an enquiry has been opened, the newspaper said.

New Year's massacre in Sicilian bar

RAGUSA (AFP) — Five men were shot dead in an execution-style killing in a bar near this Sicilian town on Saturday, police said. The five were drinking coffee, reading newspapers and chatting in the bar in Vittoria when two armed men walked in and opened fire, coolly finishing off their victims with shots at point-blank range, they said.

At least 50 killed on French roads Jan. 1

PARIS (AFP) — At least 50 people were killed on French roads on New Year's Day, France's road safety information service CNIR said on Saturday. Most of the victims were under the age of 25, it said, describing the toll as "particularly alarming." According to CNIR figures, around 20 people were killed on the roads on January 1 in 1997 and 1998.



Some 10,000 people stand together to form the sign of the Euro outside the seat of the European Central Bank in Frankfurt on Friday following the idea of the banks in Frankfurt and a local radio station to celebrate the birth of the European single currency (AFP)

Thousands work overtime to prepare for euro's trading debut

PARIS (AFP) — Tens of thousands of dealers and computer programmers across Europe were hard at work over the weekend preparing for the euro single currency's trading debut on Monday.

Some 10,000 operators, analysts, technicians and programmers worked overtime in Paris and another 30,000 in London, even though Britain is one of four of the 15 EU countries left out of the euro launch.

The City of London financial district, home to 500 foreign banks, was caught up in the fever of activity, ironing out the wrinkles after euro conversion rates were set Thursday and keyed into the national monies.

At the Paris Stock

Exchange on Saturday, some 8,500 share orders were placed in euros by midday. The bourse was officially closed, but the trading system received advance orders that

the only forex markets open on Jan. 1, but no significant deals were made because most corporate houses were closed for the day.

The euro opened at its EU-

lary for payment systems. It is possible that we shall have problems on Monday, that later in the week we will find some failed trades, some payments that were sent to the wrong banks, what we call misdirected payments, everybody is alert for that," deputy governor of the Bank of England, David Clementi, said.

The world's pre-eminent financial trading centre, London handles nearly a third of all foreign currency transactions, six times more than Frankfurt, which headquarters the ECB.

The European Central Bank (ECB) has set up a team of 150 experts to help the banks if they had any questions.

More on euro launch on pages 8 & 9

(Continued on page 12)

Further vandalism in east Jerusalem as Israeli police quiz Jewish settler

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Vandals again attacked Palestinian cars in Arab east Jerusalem overnight as Israeli police questioned a Jewish settler for a second day Saturday over a series of acts of vandalism which led to clashes in the Holy City.

The unknown assailants slashed the tyres of more than a dozen Palestinian vehicles in the Wadi Jozz district, Israeli police said.

Police detained the settler, who they have not named, following the clashes Friday but released him after a preliminary interrogation.

He is suspected of smashing the windcreens and slashing the tyres of around a dozen vehicles belonging to some of the 300,000 or so Palestinian worshippers who turned out at Islam's third holiest site, the Haram Al Sharif, for weekly prayers during the Holy

Month of Ramadan. The acts of vandalism led to clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and Jewish settlers, forcing the intervention of Israeli police.

Police said the settler belonged to a Jewish seminary in the district of Ras Al Amud run by the far-right settler group Ateret Cohanim which has sought to buy up Palestinian-owned properties in Arab east

Jerusalem since its creation in 1978.

The group aims to establish a Jewish majority in the city's eastern sector which Palestinians hope to make the capital of a future state.

Israel insists the whole city is its "eternal undivided capital" despite the international community's refusal to recognise its annexation of east Jerusalem which it captured in 1967.

King, Clinton to meet Tuesday

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein and U.S. President Bill Clinton will meet Tuesday at the White House to discuss the latest developments in the Middle East and bilateral issues, a senior official said Saturday.

The official told the Jordan Times that "His Majesty will also hold talks with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on the Middle East peace process, latest developments in the region, and U.S.-Jordanian relations."

U.S. Presidential Spokeswoman Amy Weiss Thursday announced the meeting's date and said the two leaders "will discuss the embattled Middle East peace process and U.S.-Jordanian issues."

Last Tuesday, HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, told Jordanians that His Majesty

King Hussein "has fully recovered from his illness" and has left the Mayo Clinic to convalesce in Washington and then in London before returning home.

King Hussein was hospitalised on July 14 for treatment of cancer of the lymph glands. After undergoing six sessions of chemotherapy treatment, the King was declared free of cancer but was given a transplant from his own bone marrow as a precaution.

"King Hussein will use the occasion of the White House meeting to express his appreciation for the President and the First Lady for their sympathy during the King's illness," said the official.

As for the date of the King's return home, officials said King Hussein is expected to leave Washington before the end of this week for London, where he will stay for about two weeks, before returning home.

"King Hussein is expected to return back to Jordan during the last few days of Eid Al Fitr's holiday," the official added.

Prince Hassan told Jordanians and Arab television viewers last Tuesday that "a few days of recuperation will pass before he [the King] arrives in Jordan."

"We will first depart for Washington, D.C., where we will stay for a few days before leaving for London, and then, God willing, for Amman, to be in the dear homeland with my dear people and family," King Hussein told the Regent in a letter.

Arrangements for nation-wide celebrations of the King's homecoming started in earnest, according to officials, who said each ministry had been preparing its own programme for celebrating the event.

Hizbollah warns Israel against strikes

Agencies

THE LEBANESE occupation resistance group Hizbollah warned Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday against attacking its bases in Lebanon to win votes, saying the country had been the "graveyard of many an Israeli government."

"We warn Benjamin Netanyahu against using the South Lebanon card for electoral gains," Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, whose group is battling to oust Israel from south Lebanon, told Reuters at one of his many offices in Beirut.

Israel is due to hold early elections on May 17 after Netanyahu's government failed to win broad support for his peace moves with the Palestinians.

(Continued on page 12)

Iraq wants U.N. to send home U.S., British nationals

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Iraq has told the United Nations it would no longer accept American or British citizens working in the country as part of its humanitarian programme because of the bombing raids conducted by both countries, diplomats said.

The news, which reached New York on New Year's Eve, could cause a crisis in the oil-for-food programme that allows Iraq to use oil revenues to purchase food, medicine and other supplies under U.N. supervision. In theory, the United Nations does not allow governments to dictate the makeup of its staff.

So far the diplomats, who reported the news to Reuters on Thursday, said Iraq has not put its directive in writing.

But they said foreign ministry officials had communicated the government's decision orally to U.N. authorities in Baghdad.

The exact number of American and British citizens among the 420 U.N. humanitarian workers is not known. But the sources said on Friday that Baghdad would not allow every six months to buy humanitarian supplies for ordinary Iraqis living under 8-year-old U.N. sanctions.

United Nations to send home Britons and Americans still in the country.

U.N. officials declined to comment. "We've heard such reports but we have nothing in writing," said John Mills, spokesman for the U.N. oil-for-food humanitarian programme.

But the diplomats, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Iraqi officials had told U.N. coordinators of the programme in Baghdad they were concerned about the security of U.S. and British citizens since several days of American and British bombing raids from Dec. 16 to 20.

The United Nations has some 420 international staff in Iraq, based in Baghdad and in the three Kurdish-dominated northern provinces. At the height of the bombing, the United Nations withdrew most of its staff from Baghdad but left them in the north. They returned after three days.

The oil-for-food programme permits Iraq to sell up to \$5.256 billion worth of oil every six months to buy humanitarian supplies for ordinary Iraqis living under 8-year-old U.N. sanctions.

Israel stops peace activists helping rebuild Palestinian homes

KAFAL AL HARETH (AFP) — The Israeli army on Saturday prevented a group of Israeli peace activists from helping to rebuild demolished Palestinian homes.

Troops blocked the entrance to this village about 30 kilometres north of Jerusalem, close to the Jewish settlement of Ariel. Witnesses say they used force to disperse the activists, who numbered about 200.

The army on Friday declared the village a closed military zone, for "security reasons," and forbade entry to a smaller group of activists.

The "Committee against House Demolitions" and the Peace Bloc (Gush Shalom) wanted to help rebuild two houses demolished by the army on Monday.

The houses were home to 12 people, including eight children. When the inhabitants refused to leave, the army

used tear gas to drive them out before bulldozers flattened the buildings.

On Friday the families set up tents on the ruins of their homes and unfurled banners reading: "Is this a just peace?" They brought bulldozers to clear the rubble in order to rebuild.

In the past three weeks, Israel has confiscated thousands of acres in the area in order to pave a new bypass road to Ariel.

The army often demolishes houses that are built without permits. Palestinians say that they have little choice because Israel rarely grants building permits to their people.

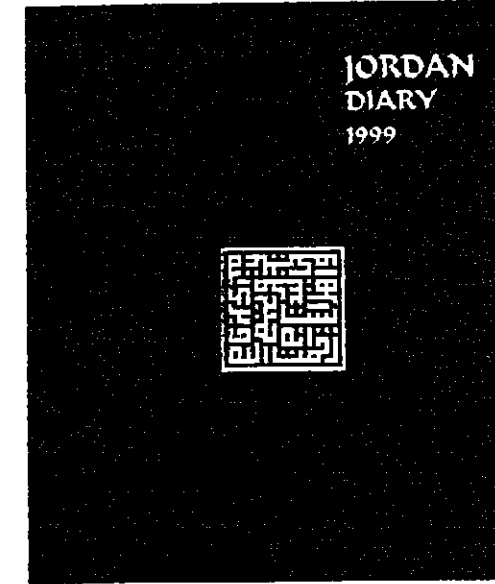
Israel has destroyed nearly 700 Palestinian houses since the signing of the 1993 Oslo accords with the Palestinians, according to the Palestinian committee on land and the environment.

About 2,000 other houses have been ordered demolished, the committee said.



Israeli soldiers on Saturday drag away an Israeli woman peace activist in the town of Kafal Al Hareth where Palestinians and Israeli peace activists tried to rebuild the demolished house of the family of Abu Yacoub (Reuters photo)

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Iraq steps up war of words against Egypt

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq on Saturday stepped up its war of words against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak following differences between the two Arab nations over last month's U.S. and British air strikes on Iraqi targets.

The Iraqi press and officials have blamed Egypt for the postponement of an Arab summit to deal with the U.S.-led attacks.

Cairo, for its part, has accused Iraqi President Saddam Hussein of provoking the four-day U.S.-led military campaign which ended on Dec. 20.

The 22-member, Cairo-based Arab League has postponed until Jan. 24 a meeting of Arab foreign ministers which had been expected to prepare for the proposed summit to discuss

the air strikes.

The newspaper Babel, owned by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday, urged Egyptians to topple Mubarak.

"Egyptians who cannot accept such behaviour... would reject their shameless ruler who has lost everything, including his self-respect," it said.

The paper also published a cartoon depicting Mubarak as obeying orders from Saudi and Kuwaiti rulers and U.S. officials.

The cartoon showed Mubarak dancing in female costume as the rulers of Kuwait stand around him, beating drums and playing music.

U.S. President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu were shown

looking on and clapping.

The official daily newspaper Al Iraq accused Mubarak of collaborating with Saudi rulers to put off the proposed Arab summit. "In order to follow up American hostile policy against Iraq, Mubarak collaborated with Saudi rulers to prevent the Arab meeting," it said.

Mubarak has been the target of harsh criticism in the Baghdad press since Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz wrote an editorial in one paper criticising him for being unreasonable in blaming Baghdad rather than Washington for the air strikes.

Egypt spearheaded Arab opposition to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and contributed troops to the U.S.-led multinational

force which drove the Iraqis out seven months later.

Iraq severed ties with Egypt and many other countries which took part in that multinational force.

But economic ties between the two Arab countries have improved since 1996 when Baghdad agreed to the oil-for-food deal with the United Nations which allows Iraq to sell limited quantities of oil to buy food and medicine.

Egypt sent a senior diplomat to Baghdad in 1993 to improve services for about 70,000 Egyptians then living in Iraq.

Last year, Egypt opened a large trade centre in Baghdad and several Egyptian ministers have visited Baghdad to conclude deals under its oil pact with the U.N.



An old Yemeni vendor displays dates Saturday, in the old city bazaar. During the Holy Muslim Month of Ramadan, Muslims refrain from food and drink from dawn to dusk, and dates are one of the main items they break their fast with. (Reuters photo)

Yemen hostage tragedy may have saved us — German

BONN (R) — A German tourist who returned home on Saturday after a kidnapping ordeal in Yemen said she and her companions may have been released unharmed only because another hostage drama ended in tragedy earlier this week.

Roswitha Adlung, 49, was among four Germans who were held by Yemeni tribesmen for 24 days before being freed on Wednesday.

Their release took place a day after Yemeni security forces intervened to liberate 16 other Western hostages in a mission which resulted in the deaths of three Britons and an Australian. "When we heard [about the deaths] we were destroyed, because that [the rescue] might have contributed to our being set free," Adlung told Reuters Television in an interview.

She thanked the government in Yemen for not resorting to force to free the German captives as controversy still swirled around who was to blame for

the deaths in the other group of eight women and eight men.

Several survivors from that group arrived in London on Friday and gave harrowing accounts of their rescue. Two other members of that party were injured.

The survivors among the Britons, Australians and Americans were unsure whether their kidnappers or the Yemeni security forces had been the first to open fire in what turned into a deadly shootout. "None of us had any idea who fired first," British survivor Brian Smith said. "We simply do not know."

The British government, dissatisfied with the version it had been told by Sanaa, has twice summoned Yemen's ambassador to Britain to account for what actually happened.

Meanwhile, British and American investigators on Saturday began an on-the-spot probe into the deaths.

Adlung, and her fellow ex-hostages — two women and

one man — flew early on Saturday to Frankfurt airport, where they were kept away from reporters upon arrival.

The group were debriefed by German security officials before being taken home to relatives in Berlin and the western border state of Saarland.

Behind them was the longest captivity of any Western tourists in the Middle East state — an ordeal which need never have taken place, Adlung said.

She thanked the German government for its diplomatic efforts to free the group unharmed. President Roman Herzog had appealed directly to the Yemeni government to avoid the use of force.

But she criticised the foreign ministry for failing to give clearer warnings of the dangers of travelling in Yemen, saying her group had avoided areas marked out by Bonn as dangerous. "It should have been made clearer that it was dangerous everywhere in Yemen," said

Adlung, sitting on the sofa in the living room of her brother's Berlin home. "We were also not told of the number of attacks on foreigners in the past year."

The German tourists were abducted by armed gunmen who held up their vehicle on a busy road and then drove them for four hours into the mountains. On the way, they came under fire.

"Then we were led into a tent... and were immediately welcomed as guests," she said. "And then we sat and drank tea."

The group was moved around three times while in captivity, in constant fear that they could be executed. "Because of the number of weapons that they had, I thought that they might shoot us, one by one, to blackmail the government," she said.

Adlung, who showed few outward signs of what she had been through, said had probably one of the last to realise that she had actually been freed.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Sudan, U.S. in secret contacts'

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail has revealed that "intensive secret" contacts are under way between Khartoum and Washington towards the restoration of relations. Ismail was quoted by Al Rai al Aam daily on Saturday as saying that the contacts stemmed from a directive by U.S. President Bill Clinton to the State Department to open a serious and constructive dialogue with Sudan. Although Khartoum has lodged a complaint with the U.N. Security Council against Washington over the U.S. bombing of a pharmaceutical plant last August, Sudan "has never thought of closing the door to dialogue with Washington," Ismail said.

Sudan opposition stages protest

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The outlawed Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) observed Independence Day on Friday by staging a major anti-government demonstration, witnesses said. The demonstrators marched across Omdurman, Khartoum's twin city, while police followed closely without intervening, the witnesses said. Chanting slogans against the government and legislation on party formation that took effect Friday, the demonstrators set out from the house of the late Ismail Al Azhari, independence leader and DUP founder, and marched to his grave for a spirited rally.

Egypt detains 43 militants

CAIRO (R) — Prosecutors have detained for questioning 43 men suspected of belonging to Egypt's largest Islamist group, security sources said on Saturday. The detainees, arrested last month, will be held for 15 days on suspicion of trying to revive Al Gama'a al Islamiya (Islamic Group) and planning to kill public figures and blow up important sites, security sources said. They said that the men had formed Gama'a cells and that documents were seized proving their membership in the group.

Germany calls on Turkey to reduce military on Cyprus

BONN (AP) — Germany welcomed on Wednesday the Greek Cypriot president's decision not to deploy missiles on the divided island, and called on Turkey to reduce its military presence there in response. Foreign Ministry spokesman Martin Erdmann said such a move by Turkey would contribute to building trust in Cyprus. Germany, which assumes the rotating European Union presidency on Friday, would like to help find a "just and lasting solution" for the Cyprus problem, Erdmann said. Turkey had threatened military action if the Russian-made missiles were actually deployed.

22 killed in Algeria

ALGIERS (AP) — Armed men massacred a family of 22 early Saturday in a rural area some 400 kilometres southwest of Algiers, authorities said.

Security forces mounted "a vast search operation" for the killers, a statement said, and Health Minister Yahia Guidoum travelled to the massacre site, near Al Bayadh, on a plateau where numerous families — like the victims — cultivate sheep and other livestock.

Details of the pre-dawn massacre were not immediately available. Residents of Al Bayadh contacted by telephone said the killings were the work of the radical Armed Islamic Group, blamed by authorities for the violence that has torn Algeria for seven years.

According to the residents, the armed band was carrying out a vengeance massacre because members of the family were reportedly close to security forces. That information could not be immediately confirmed. Islamic insurgents have

been known in the past to punish with death families whose members join self-defence forces set up by the government.

The massacre raised the death toll to more than 70 since Dec. 19, the start of Ramadan.

The Muslim holy month has, for the past seven years, seen increased activity by Islamic insurgents trying to topple Algeria's military-backed government.

Several privately-owned newspapers reported Saturday the killing of at least a dozen members of Algeria's security forces in two ambushes earlier in the week and the death of a Muslim extremist "emir" in a third ambush.

There was no immediate official confirmation of the reports. According to Le Quotidien d'Oran, nine soldiers were machine-gunned to death on Thursday after the two jeeps they were riding in hit mines.

Cairo pets get state-of-the-art hospital and motel

By Hala Boncompagni
AFP

CAIRO — Egypt's first animal motel, state-of-the-art hospital and a super mini-market offering canine toothpaste and diet food for pets has opened for business at a cost of about one million dollars.

Located in the upmarket Cairo neighbourhood of Mohandiseen, the private Cairo Vet Centre boasts a modern polyclinic and laboratory and a mini-market selling 400 items of food, including diet

meals, animal toys, anti-flea shampoos and other useful goods for man's four-legged and feathered friends.

Already 15 dogs have checked in at the 25-cell motel on the southern fringes of Mohandiseen which opened last month. But it's also open to horses, cats and other domestic animals, who can choose between a single or suite — the latter usually destined for expecting or newlywed pets.

Middle-coloured light-bulbs and posters of cats and dogs

were strung outside the building housing the ground-floor clinic, off the fashionable Gamaat Al Dowal Avenue in Mohandiseen, for its inauguration in mid-December.

Guests were invited to come without their pets to celebrate the event which culminated with the slaughtering of a calf in the street outside the building, in a traditional gesture of goodwill with the meat going to the poor.

"Unfortunately no one in the Middle East is interested in developing the veterinary field.

This line of work is considered of little importance," said veterinarian Ahmad Al Shebiny, owner of the venture.

Shebiny, a fellow at the Animal Health Trust Hospital in the English town of Newmarket, enlisted the help of three Egyptian veterinary surgeons who had established practices abroad because of the lack of interest at home.

Safwat Al Mokhtar Ali Hassan said he will shuttle between Cairo and Karlsruhe in Germany where he runs an animal clinic. "There are 10

vet clinics in Cairo but none have the equipment we have here," Hassan told visitors.

The consultation room is equipped with an ultrasound machine, an ophthalmoscope, a laryngoscope and a portable X-ray for house calls, while the surgery room has an ultraviolet lamp, used for sterilisation, and the latest tools used in bone and open heart surgery.

"We can perform all sorts of surgery from cataracts to neurosurgery," said Hassan. According to Shebiny, five per cent of Cairo's 16 million

inhabitants own pets or other domestic animals and the clinic hopes that it will be able to reach a large number of them.

So far the first clients are expatriates and wealthy Egyptians who have no qualms on spending from three to five dollars a day for a motel room — full board of course — for their pets.

The cost of simple surgery will be around \$200 and nearly \$300 for more serious operations, or up to three times the average monthly salary of an Egyptian office worker.

JORDAN TELEVISION Tel. 4773111-19 PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Cartoon — The Pink Panther
15:20 The Pumpkin Patch
15:30 Lift Off
16:00 Doc — Big Cat Diary
16:30 Ch. 2 Links with Ch. 1
17:00 The Grand Secret
18:15 Omar Ben Abdul Aziz
19:00 The Journal
19:15 Words of Wisdom
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — The Brits
20:00 Journey Across the Land of Islam
20:30 Drama — Walker, Texas Ranger
21:15 Doc — Faring & Ecology
21:30 Entertainment — Behind the Scenes
22:00 News in English
22:30 Melissa
23:10 Drama — Doogie Howser
23:59 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:54 Fajr
05:09 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:40 Dhuhr
14:25 Asr
16:48 Maghreb
18:11 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweith, Tel. 5930740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5863897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweith
Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4992679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The American Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

It will be sunny with temperatures rising slightly and winds southeasterly light to moderate. In Agaba, winds will be northerly moderate, and seas choppy.

Amman 06/18
Agaba 11/25
Deserts 04/17
Jordan Valley 12/24

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 16, Agaba 22 Humidity readings: Amman 39 per cent, Agaba 36 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajlun 04/12
Jerash 05/16
Um Qays 05/16
Madaba 06/17
Petra 04/17
Dead Sea 13/25

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Ghazi Za'wadeh 4126011
Dr. Khalid Asfour 5332600
Dr. Amr Hawandah 5332350
Dr. Tawfiq Qub'ain 4623029

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadad Pharmacy 5537004
Rula Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Za'wadeh 021250080
Fou'ad Pharmacy 021273360

ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad 091885550
Palestine Pharmacy 091883562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police, 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 467101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615

Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53300
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic Abdi 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4642816
Akileh Maternity 464241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5534444
Al-Munasher Hospital 56672719
Al-Ahli, Abdali 56641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 477101/3
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 091883323
Zarqa National Hospital 091880560
Ibn Sina Hospital 091886731
Al Hilana Modern Hospital 091990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 021275555
Roman Catholic Hospital

021272725
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital 0217101372, 0217103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital 0217102831, 0217102011
Specialty Hospital 0217103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 0312040111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. 44153200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875301-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:40 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
08:25 Bombay (RJ)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
08:40 Vienna (add) (RJ)
08:50 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:00 Beirut (RJ)
09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:45 London (RJ)

021272725
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital 0217101372, 0217103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital 0217102831, 0217102011
Specialty Hospital 0217103100

Other Flights

12:30 Aden (TY)
14:35 Istanbul (TK)
18:00 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
18:45 Kiev (SU)
19:05 Paris (AF)
20:25 Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40 Cairo (MS)
22:25 London, Damascus (RJ)
23:35 Amsterdam (KL)
23:55 Larnaca (CY)
00:55 Bucharest (RO)
02:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

09:30 Agaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
11:10 Agaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
16:00 Agaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
22:50 Agaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:00 Agaba, Paris (add) (RJ)

05:20 Beirut (RJ)
10:10 Frankfurt (RJ)
10:30 Rome (add) (RJ)
11:15 Rome (RJ)
11:20 Vienna (RJ)
11:25 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:15 Athens (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
18:30 Agaba, Vienna (add) (RJ)
20:25 Cairo (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (RJ)
20:35 New Delhi (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:40 Damascus (RJ)
22:30 Bangkok (RJ)
00:10 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
00:30 Sanaa (RJ)
00:40 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

07:10 Frankfurt (LH)
13:30 Aden (TY)
15:35 Istanbul (TK)
19:00 Dubai (EK)
19:40 Kiev (SU)
20:00 Beirut (ME)
21:10 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40 Cairo (MS)
00:35 Amsterdam (KL)
01:55 Bucharest (RO)
03:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

07:00 Agaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30 Agaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Agaba (from QAIA) (RW)

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Her Royal Highness Princess Basma talks to an orphaned child from a village near Irbid where she had an iftar after distributing food and clothes to needy families the company of 100 children.

Princess Basma takes Ramadan Charity Campaign on the road

AMMAN (J.T.) — As part of the ongoing Ramadan Charity Campaign to aid the poor, Her Royal Highness Princess Basma toured villages and towns in the Irbid, Jerash and Ajloun governorates where she met the needy and distributed financial and in-kind aid to hundreds of poor families.

The beneficiaries, including residents of refugee camps and 15 villages, received aid worth JD95,000 along with medicine and medical equipment worth another JD25,000.

The Princess's first stop was in the Jerash region where she was accorded an enthusiastic welcome by local citizens and schoolchildren to whom she distributed gifts.

The Princess then moved on to the Gaza refugee camp and met with members of local charitable centres and representatives of the local residents who expressed their joy over His Majesty King Hussein's complete cure.

Princess Basma, president of the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF), the annual organiser of the

campaign, later visited the rest of the villages where she chatted with schoolchildren and local citizens enquiring about their living conditions. She later met with members of women groups.

Accompanied by the members of QAF's higher committee, Princess Basma made her final stop at a village near Irbid where she distributed food and clothes to needy families and had iftar in the company of 100 orphaned children. The iftar was hosted by Al Farouqi Charitable Society.

Princess Basma is continuing the campaign to collect contributions and distribute them to needy families, mainly in Jordan's remote villages.

Five hundred families from the refugee camp, 350 from the villages of the Ajloun governorate and another 350 in the Jerash area received gifts and medicine during Princess's Basma's tour.

The financial and in-kind contributions were donated by economic institutions, banks, private organisations, companies, factories and private citizens.

Lower House committee to open discussion on Abbadi's immunity

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Legal Committee of the Lower House of Parliament is scheduled to start discussions tomorrow of a request from the criminal Court's prosecutor general to lift the parliamentary immunity of Deputy Ahmad Oweidi Abbadi to allow him to stand trial in two court cases connected with alleged sexual assault.

The committee, chaired by Deputy Ghaleb Zou'bi, announced it received the request and the necessary documents, channelled to it through the House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali.

According to parliamentary regulations, cases concerning immunity of deputies are referred to the Legal Committee for review. The committee issues its recommendations to the House within a period of two weeks.

Abbadi has denied the allegations levelled against him and the husband of the woman who filed one of the sexual assault cases against

the deputy has dropped charges. But according to the Legal Committee, the husband's decision to drop charges does not mean that the case is dropped in the Lower House.

Informed sources told the Jordan Times that the woman who had filed the case claimed that she had an affair with Abbadi who promised to marry her.

According to the Jordanian Constitution, senators and deputies shall not be subject to court prosecution while Parliament is in session unless an absolute majority of the Lower House finds enough evidence to allow prosecution.

Since the restoration of parliamentary life in 1989, the House has never lifted the immunity of any deputy and has since turned down two similar requests involving former deputies Yaqoub Qirish and Jamal Khreisha.

Party leaders blast Arab governments for a 'lack of courage'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Leaders of political parties, prominent Jordanian politicians and women groups on Friday voiced condemnation of the British-U.S. strikes against Iraq and called on the Arab and Islamic nations to take the initiative of ending the sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people.

Among the main speakers at a public rally held at Khalil Al Rahman Society was the Muslim Brotherhood's overall leader Abdul Majid Thuneibat, who accused Arab regimes of lacking courage and political potency, saying leaders even were afraid to hold a summit to discuss the Iraqi question.

Praising the support for Iraq expressed by Arab parliamentarians during a recent extraordinary meeting in Amman to discuss the recent U.S.-British aggression on Iraq, Thuneibat said the parliamentarians should force their governments to lift the sanctions, stressing that Arab countries can and should take this initiative to save the Iraqi people from further aggression.

Na'el Barakat, head of the Higher Committee for Coordination among Opposition Parties, said hostile powers have imposed their hegemony over Arab oil resources and have forced Gulf countries to accept and support enemy troops stationed on their soil under the pretext of defending Arab states.

Describing the U.S.-British attacks as barbaric, Barakat demanded that Arab states back Iraq's drive to end the eight-year-old economic embargo and also expressed appreciation to Russia and China for their stand during the recent confrontation.

Hussein Mjalli, president of the Jordanian Bar Association, attacked the government for banning the professional associations from meeting with the Iraqi parliamentary delegation who visited Amman to attend the Arab Parliamentary Union's extraordinary meeting.

Mjalli accused successive governments of trying to sever Jordan from the Arab World and of subjecting the country to the will of the enemies of the Arab Nation.

Mjalli urged Arabs to call for a summit which should be totally dedicated to the lifting of sanctions and urged Syria and Iraq to unite their efforts in the face of the common enemy.

Laila Khaled, a leading Palestinian political activist, said the mere words of condemnation are futile and cannot achieve anything.

Arab women in Iraq have lost one million of their children during the embargo and are steadfast in their stand, Khaled said. She urged Arab states to rally behind Iraq's struggle for freedom from aggression and Western hegemony.

Refinery caught unaware by gas shortage Relief expected with gas shipment from Greece

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Officials from the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company are working round the clock to meet public demand for gas after being caught by surprise by an unexpected gas shortage.

"Employees at Amman, Zarqa and Irbid gas stations are currently working 24 hours in order to control the situation," said Minister of Water, Supply and Energy Hani Mulki.

However, Jordanians from all walks of life are still flocking to gas distribution agencies hoping to replace their empty cylinders with full ones.

"I have been standing here for more than three hours, waiting for the shop to open to bring gas to my hungry and freezing children," said Omar Suleiman, 45.

Suleiman and around 100 other citizens were waiting in the freezing weather on Friday night in front of a closed gas agency in Sweileh.

"The sign reads, 'gas will be available after eight p.m.' People, with their gas cylinders, have been wait-

ing here since half past five, and now it is around nine but no body showed up," said another citizen covering his head with a kufia while shivering with cold.

Some citizens were unable to stand the cold and left home unable to fill their cylinders hoping tomorrow will bring better luck.

"We have no gas to cook with. We want to know if there really is gas or not," said an old woman.

At around 10 p.m., only five people were left in the queue after the others abandoned the waiting game for the time being. Most said they expected to have to spend another night eating bread and cheese while preparing themselves to fast the next day from sunrise till sunset.

Others put the empty cylinders in their cars and roamed around the capital hoping to find vans distributing gas.

The refinery company decided last week to ration gas distribution following the sudden shortage caused by an unexpected increase in public demand for the commodity when the current cold wave started affecting the Kingdom. Jordan's daily consumption of

between 500 and 550 tonnes of liquefied gas during summer soared to 1,250 tonnes a day in winter.

Mulki said the problem is an ever-increasing public need for gas as well as the limited production capacity of gas distribution stations across the country.

"Jordan does not face a problem with Iraq concerning gas and the Iraqi officials are very understanding to Jordan's situation," said Mulki. "The refinery company received 37,000 tonnes of liquefied gas while another 40,000 tonnes of gas, ordered from Greece, are expected to dock the port of Aqaba on Wednesday."

Jordanians were shocked by the sudden shortage of gas supplies in the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company, which earlier had assured Jordanians that the company has enough gas supplies for roughly three months. Mulki earlier said Jordan has gas supplies only for five to six days.

A concession agreement between the government and the refinery stipulates that the latter must meet the public demands of fuels

and gas. Mulki also said the government is studying the possibility of allowing the private sector to import liquefied gas next year "after studying all legal aspects of the move to avoid a possible repetition of the same situation."

Some citizens complained they had to pay JD2.50 for one cylinder while the official price is JD2.20.

The refinery said it was forced to implement a five per cent ration on gas supplies distributed.

However, gas distribution agencies said they had been receiving around 70 per cent of their actual daily needs.

"We were allowed to take only 54 cylinders, while we usually replace around 80 cylinders a day," Ismat Ali, from Jamal Gas distribution agency in the suburb of Sweileh, told the Jordan Times.

One columnist seemed to be less optimistic that the crisis will soon be over.

"The crisis is still there. We witnessed that ourselves. Looking for a gas cylinder was like searching for a needle in a haystack."

Days of water well abuse numbered Government initiates crackdown on private wells

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — The government Saturday said it has launched an ongoing crackdown against the abuse of 1,654 privately-run water wells as part of efforts to combat illegal use of water.

Minister of Water and Energy Hani Mulki told the Jordan Times that the Cabinet recently formed a committee, which includes the ministries of water and irrigation, interior, municipal and rural affairs and the environment to control the use of these wells.

Over the past decades, the government allowed land owners to pump water from wells for agricultural and domestic use in areas that have no direct supplies. Each well has an average of pumping capacity of 50-100 cubic metres per hour.

According to law, owners are required to install meters at all licensed wells to allow the Water Authority to take readings to ensure that the annual quota of 50,000 cubic metres of water each is not surpassed. Violators are required to pay 250 fils per each cubic metre above the set amount.

However, overpumping continues unabated and meters are occasionally reset or broken, while the government appears to be turning

a blind eye on reported violations, according to private and official water industry sources, who claimed that of the 1,654 wells, 528 are unlicensed and therefore have no meters.

Many industry sources have said the government will be reluctant to take measures against such action because of several economic and legal considerations and to avoid potential trouble from "influential" well owners.

Such wells were the main source of water supply for Amman during last summer's water pollution crisis.

Last week, the Water Authority referred to court 1,500 cases involving residents allegedly receiving water illegally either by tampering with or damaging water meters. Illegal use of water reportedly causes the treasury a JD15 million loss every year.

The government had stopped supplying these households with water after violations were discovered and they will be charged by the prosecutor general in accordance with the volume of illegally received water.

The government estimates that more than 50 per cent of water circulated to citizens was lost annually to both a worn out water network and illegal water usage.

Mulki said the decision is part of a scheme that will also help meet a water shortage that could occur next summer if the winter ends with low amounts of rainfall.

The plan includes controlling the water pumping from wells used for agricultural purposes through forcing owners to adhere to the above mentioned quota and to link privately-owned wells around Amman to the main network in order to meet a possible shortage.

Jordanians will have to live with chronic water shortages as the government scrambles to find local and foreign financiers to fund new, non-traditional water sources.

According to an official report, fresh water resources will be fully utilised by the year 2005. Hence, investment in water projects is one of the government's major goals for the 21st century to help solve the water crisis.

On Thursday, Mulki signed an \$800,000 agreement with a local firm to dig two deep wells in Karak in order to examine the quality of 30,000-year-old Disi aquifer.

Last October, the government solicited around 51 local, Arab and foreign firms to pre-qualify for the \$730 million project on a build, operate and transfer basis to draw

water to Amman from the Disi aquifer in the south of the country.

It said it was seeking to appoint a consortium to finance, construct and manage the project in a joint venture arrangement with a Jordanian public shareholding company.

The Disi-Amman conveyance system will be transferred to the government after 20 years. It will entail drilling wells, building a pumping station and a 325-kilometre water pipeline from the Disi aquifer to the capital for the delivery of 100 million cubic metres by 2005.

Official figures suggest that by the year 2000, Jordan's population, growing at around 3.5 per cent annually, will require 1,257 million cubic metres of water to cover minimum needs while resources will be capable of supplying only 960 million cubic metres.

Jordan relies mainly on rainwater to meet domestic, agricultural and industrial needs which is tapped from surface water sources such as rivers and renewable groundwater sources.

Officials insist the government is already working to remedy its critical water shortage by modernising distribution networks with the help of foreign donors.

Aqaba church find 'pure serendipity'

By Joe Wheelan
The Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — It was an astonishing piece of luck. After a lunch, Professor Thomas Parker was looking for an ancient Roman trading port and dug up what may be the oldest known Christian church.

Other structures converted to churches are older than the two-story mud-brick building that Parker found in Aqaba, Jordan, a Red Sea resort city 210 miles south of Amman. Parker's discovery, however, is the oldest building known to exist that was erected solely as a Christian worshipping place, he said.

Built around 290 or 300 A.D. by early Christians, the church somehow survived the "Great Persecution" when the Roman Emperor Diocletian ordered churches razed and Christians tortured between 303 and 311. The church may have been spared because it lay on the empire's southeastern periphery, Parker said.

It was destroyed by a catastrophic earthquake in 363 and buried by the desert.

Parker, 48, on the North Carolina State University history faculty since 1980, became interested in Aqaba and its predecessor, the ancient Roman port of

Aila, when he shifted his scholarly research from Roman military history to Roman economy. He found himself in the middle of a debate about how big a role trade played.

"We didn't go to Aqaba to find the oldest church in the world, but to find evidence of Roman economic activity," he said. "The discovery of the church was an unexpected bonus."

Ancient historical texts suggested Aila's likely location in present-day Aqaba, which lies at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba, an arm of the Red Sea. Parker and his wife walked the area in 1993 after examining old British Royal Air Force aerial photos. They found pottery shards that encouraged them to return in 1994.

That year, he and his 50-member expedition found Aila in the middle of a thriving port city that was undergoing a construction boom.

"It was serendipity that we started when we did," Parker said of the expedition's timing. "We could have lost a major historic site."

Only when his crew last summer excavated the apex on the eastern end of the building did he become confident enough to consider announcing his findings.

what's going on

FILM

• "La Belle et la Bête" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh on Monday Jan. 4 at 8:30 p.m.

CONCERT

• Musical performance entitled "May God Protect Al Hussein" at the Royal Cultural Center on Monday Jan. 4 at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

• Photo exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Jan. 10.
• Exhibition of ceramics, sculpture and abstract (plastic) art by Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese and Sudanese artists at Hammourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Jan. 25.

• Exhibition of Nabataean silver jewelry at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Saqra Street, until Jan. 15 (Tel. 569141/2).

• "The Warm Winter" — works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1.

• The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until Jan. 28.

Health ministry expected to set new regulations for registration of pharmacies

AMMAN (J.T.) — Health Minister Na'el Ajlouni is expected to announce the new conditions and regulations concerning the opening of pharmacies in the country, according to a report published by the local press Saturday.

The new regulations are designed to organise the profession and ensure distribution of drug stores in accordance with public demand in various parts of the country, according to the report.

The report quoted excerpts of the new regulations, noting that qualified pharmacists can open drug stores in Amman, Irbid and Zarqa provided that a licence to practise was obtained from the Ministry of Health at least five years prior to the date of registering the business. Those wishing to open pharmacies in the other governorates should have a licence for three years, and those wishing to open pharmacies within the municipalities of small towns should have obtained a licence at least one year in advance.

Also according to the new regulations, licences for pharmacies can be issued immedi-

ately if they are to open in areas where no pharmacies exist.

The Health Ministry's regulations made it a condition that no pharmacy can transfer from one area to another unless the move is justified under the same set of regulations and with the Health Ministry's approval or after the lapse of the number of years as stipulated under the same regulations.

The new regulations were called for by the Jordan Pharmacists Association which said that the lack of them has created a confusion, allowing pharmacies to open at random. There are 1,600 pharmacies in the country at present, or one pharmacy for every 900 persons. The figure exceeds the world rate of one pharmacy for every 5,000 to 8,000 citizens, according to the association.

The association said that the glut in the number of pharmacies has caused a decline in income, making it difficult for proprietors to recover the estimated average of JD40,000 capital invested in each business.

Jordan to compile human development report Low per capita income mars Kingdom's human development standing — UNDP report

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — Jordan is compiling its own national human development report (HDR) to monitor human development, detect change and predict new socio-economic trends.

"Jordan's report will serve as an advocacy tool for the wider utilisation of the sustainable human development concept," said Zein Hayek coordinator of the "Human Development Profiles and Strategy for Jordan" project under which the HDR is being formulated.

She told the Jordan Times that the country needed such a report "to assist in identifying the country's specific problems and conceptualise national priorities."

For the past nine years, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) annual Human Development Report has provided an overview of development in 174 industrialised and developing countries.

Last year, Jordan was classified as having achieved a medium standard of human development, ranking 87th out of 174 according to the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI is based on three socio-economic indicators: life expectancy, adult literacy, and per capita income.

Despite the country's accom-

plishments in literacy and life expectancy, Jordan's per capita income continues to be low and has affected its HDI rank.

Jordan, last year, dropped three places from 84 in 1997 with Canada remaining in the lead for the second consecutive year. Bahrain ranks the highest among Arab countries.

More than 100 countries have formulated their own national HDRs. Jordan's HDR is expected to be released in March. Actual work on Jordan's HDR commenced five months ago in cooperation with the UNDP, the Ministry of Social Development and with the financial assistance of the British government's Department for International Development (DFID).

According to Hayek, a researcher at the Human Development Directorate at the Ministry of Planning, Jordan's report will pave the way for a systematic human development strategy. She added that this strategy will be "based on actions to be taken to deal with the main problems the Kingdom, and strategic objectives to be attained."

Economic recession was identified by the UNDP as one of the main challenges to the region not only because of its impact on poverty and employment levels, but also on constricting the rates of develop-

ment. Jordan has adopted "Youth" as the theme for its report, reflecting a principle pressing demographic feature of the country, said Hayek.

"Unemployment is a serious problem in the country. This issue and many others facing this segment of the population cannot be ignored," she stressed.

Approximately 30 per cent of the Jordanian population is made up of youth between the age of 15 to 25. Chapter three of the report attempts to project the Kingdom's youth population over the next 25 years.

"Youth are those who are unmarried, live with their parents, and are economically dependent on them. This means that those between 25 and 30 could be included within this definition," Hayek defined.

Human development experts feel that information about the situation of Jordanian youth is scarce; hence society does not know the real problems and challenges it may soon face.

The report tackles the issue of youth from the perspective of education, employment, and social integration. In the latter domain, Hayek said the report will highlight the extraordinary pressure youth are up against.

Special attention is given to socio-economic and socio-cul-

tural factors that promote the social integration of youth in addition to social exclusion and alienation.

One objective behind the Jordan HDR is the identification of a series of complete indicators to be used in the construction of a social integration index.

The HDI is the subject of the report's second chapter and takes a "hard-nosed look at UNDP statistics on Jordan used in the global HDR," said Hayek.

She explained that those involved in preparing the report want to see the origin of these numbers and review their accuracy.

Princess Basma, the United Nations Honorary Ambassador on Human Development, proposed the initiation of an Annual Arab Human Development Report in Bahrain at the regional launch of the HDR there.

The aim of an Arab report is "to focus on selected policy issues, as well as highlighting successful country experiences and providing input for the formulation of human development strategies," Princess Basma told the Jordan Times.

The Jordan HDR concludes with policy implications for the Kingdom's human development and an index analysis of youth in Jordan.

Political fight shapes up in Indonesia

JAKARTA (AFP) — A political fight was looming here Saturday over the likely disqualification of scores of new political parties from taking part in the first general elections since the fall of Suharto.

The wrangle was triggered by a statement by Home Affairs Minister Syarwan Hamid last week that only 15 of some 120 parties that have sprung up since Suharto's fall would qualify for the June 7 polls under new laws being drawn up by parliament.

Indonesian President B.J. Habibie, a former Suharto protégé, in a New Year's Eve address pledged he would do all he could to ensure the elections would be free and fair, and urged Indonesians to see them as the door to a new beginning.

But a university student senate in Central Java warned in an announcement published by the Indonesian Observer Saturday that if it saw the new rules as unfair or "benefiting the status quo" it could boycott the polls.

The Diponegoro University senate also said it would welcome any political parties unhappy with the rules to join the boycott.

Student groups in Jakarta, who have been at the forefront of the reform battle with massive street demonstrations, told AFP they were awaiting the publication of the parliamentary rules before taking action.

"It is becoming clear that the (Jakarta student) groups will be divided between those who are for the elections, and those against," said one student leader from Forkot, the students' City Forum grouping some 30 universities in the greater Jakarta area.

Meanwhile respected moderate Muslim scholar, Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid, lashed out at any boycott plan, and called a separate move mooted last week by the smaller parties to hold their own election as "unconstitutional."

"If there is a rival election, it is clearly unconstitutional," said Gus Dur, who has been shuttling between the armed forces, the president, the students and leading reformists in an attempt to shore up national unity at a time of waning confidence in the government.

The current government, Gus Dur said, was "in a mess," but the best way out was through elections "organised by a fair and just committee" with the Habibie government acting only as a facilitator.

Should only 15 parties meet a government proposal now before parliament for representation in one third of the country's 27 provinces, more than 100 of the new parties that have mushroomed since Suharto's fall on May 21 would be out of the running.

Some critics of the government proposals have counter-proposed that all 120 be allowed to run in June 1999 to serve as a weeding-out process for the next five-yearly elections in 2005.

But the only parties represented in parliament are the three allowed under Suharto's rule — the ruling Golkar party, the Muslim-oriented United Development Party (PPP) and the smaller Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI).

The current leading presidential hopefuls are Habibie, Megawati Sukarnoputri, popular daughter of the country's founding president Sukarno, and Muslim intellectual Amien Rais.

Megawati was kicked out of the PDI leadership when the Suharto government rigged a PDI conference in 1996, a move that was greeted by widespread rioting in Jakarta.

The Golkar-majority parliament is currently deadlocked over whether civil servants should be allowed to hold party posts, a practice which helped Golkar sweep every poll since the early 1970s.



A destroyed car sits in the parking lot of the Waterfront in Cape Town. Police said two people were injured in the car bomb explosion at the entertainment area where two people were killed in a pipe bomb blast last August. Police said it was too early to speculate on who was behind the car bomb at the height of the summer tourist season (Reuters photo)

Police hunt for clues after Cape Town car bomb

CAPE TOWN (R) — Police were hunting for clues Saturday to the identity of attackers who injured three people with a car bomb in Cape Town's Waterfront, tourist mecca.

The New Year's Day blast was the second in four months at the hugely popular complex, which was crisscrossed with holidaymakers at the height of the southern hemisphere's summer.

Police said they were studying video and security camera footage of the area but had no clues to the size of the bomb or the motive for planting it in a location with no clear target.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

A forensic expert from Pretoria was due in Cape Town later Saturday to assess the explosive and the device and to see if it

matched bombs used in urban terror attacks in recent months in the Cape Flats area east of Cape Town.

Police spokeswoman Anine de Beer said the Toyota Corolla which carried the bomb had been stolen two days earlier just north of the city.

Three people were treated for minor injuries and released from hospital after the Friday evening explosion. Two others were treated for shock.

The wreckage of the gutted white Corolla, and of other cars around it, provided an unusual attraction Saturday as shoppers and holidaymakers arrived at the Waterfront.

In August a powerful pipe bomb ripped through the U.S.-franchised Planet Hollywood restaurant, killing two people and injuring more than 25.

That attack was widely attributed to the work of Muslim extremists angry at U.S. missile attacks on targets in Afghanistan and Sudan.

There was immediate speculation that the New Year's Day car blast might also have been the work of militants in retaliation for the air strikes by British and U.S. warplanes against Iraq.

The explosion followed the bombing of a synagogue on Dec. 18. British Prime Minister Tony Blair is to visit the city next week.

But Western Cape Province Premier Gerald Morkel, facing national elections in under six months, moved quickly to offer a possible alternative explanation.

"I wonder if there is a force with a hidden agenda to create the impression that this province is out of control," he told reporters late Friday night.

At the Waterfront complex, it was business as usual Saturday only a few hours after the blast.

"Cape Town is too wonderful a place to be put off coming by something like this," Australian cruise ship visitor Debbie Timbs said as she sipped her morning coffee in a cafe.

"We can't run and hide. These people are cowards. We will come again," said breakfasting Brian Simpson from Durban.

Police have said the Planet Hollywood bomb was similar to other blasts connected with gang warfare in the region.

For tourist Kate Crawford there was no chance of the attack ruining her New Year holiday. "I come from Northern Ireland. I am used to this," she said.

Congolese rebels admit loss of town

KISANGANI, Congo (AP) — Congolese rebels have admitted they lost a northwestern town to forces loyal to President Laurent Kabila, blaming lack of men and dense forests for slowing their advance.

Maj. Siatilo Ngizo, speaking at rebel headquarters in Kisangani, Congo's third largest city and the last navigable port up the Congo River, said Friday that government troops, aided by Rwandan Hutu fighters, had captured Businga after a day of heavy air bombardment last week.

He said Businga, about 1,200 kilometres northeast of the capital, Kinshasa, fell because most of the rebel troops were engaged in capturing Gemena and its airbase, 200 kilometres to the west, and left the town unprotected.

Ngizo said the rebels were attempting to retake Businga.

The Congolese rebels and their Rwandan and Ugandan backers are attempting to secure positions in northwestern Equateur Province, home territory of former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, in their advance on Kinshasa.

Shortly after the rebellion began Aug. 2, rebels airlifted from eastern Congo across Africa's third-largest country to its Atlantic coast came close to taking the capital but were routed by the intervention of troops from Zimbabwe and Angola.

Namibia and Chad have also sent forces in support of Kabila, who refuses to negotiate with the rebels, accusing them of being the puppets of Rwanda and

Uganda and demanding the withdrawal of foreign forces.

Rwanda and Uganda say they will keep troops in Congo until they have neutralised bases in eastern Congo used by Rwandan and Ugandan rebels attempting to destabilise their governments.

Rwanda accuses Kabila of enlisting thousands of former Rwandan Hutu soldiers and militia, responsible for a 1994 genocide in Rwanda of more than 500,000 people.

The Tutsi-led rebels won power in July 1994, and most of the Hutu fighters fled to the former Zaire.

Wednesday, Zimbabwe announced that forces loyal to Kabila had captured Businga and Fizi on the shores of Lake Tanganyika on Congo's eastern border.

But Ngizo denied Fizi had fallen, saying the town was in the middle of the rebel-held territory.

However, New Vision, the Ugandan government-owned daily, reported Friday that Fizi had fallen to local Mai-Mai warriors, a loose grouping of eastern tribes hostile to Rwandan and Ugandan involvement in Congo and sometimes allied with Kabila.

There was no independent confirmation of either report.

Meanwhile, Ngizo said rebels controlled Pweto on Lake Mweru on Congo's southeastern border with Zambia, from where they were pushing southwest in the direction of Lubumbashi, the capital of copper-rich Katanga Province and Kabila's home turf.

Japan's emperor leads New Year celebrations

TOKYO (AFP) — Emperor Akihito led Japan's New Year celebrations in a rare public appearance Saturday, underlining the imperial family's undying influence over the economic power dogged by its worst post-war recession.

Millions of people also flocked to temples and shrines, in a traditional pilgrimage during the country's most festive period, to pray for prosperity and good health.

"It is my sincere pleasure to greet and celebrate the New Year together," the 65-year-old monarch told thousands of well-wishers from behind bullet-proof glass on a balcony at the Imperial Palace.

Some 64,000 people cheer-

fully waved small rising-sun flags and shouted "banzai (long live)" as Akihito, Empress Michiko and other members of the imperial family appeared seven times.

The palace, a former castle of the Tokugawa shogunate, surrounded by moats and high stone walls, is usually off limits to the public.

Commoners have been allowed to enter the palace grounds twice a year, on Jan. 2 and the emperor's birthday, as the imperial household cautiously opened up after World War II.

At Tokyo's Meiji Shrine, dedicated to Akihito's great grandfather, there were 2.7 million visitors between New Year's Eve and Saturday evening. Police estimate the turnout could reach 3.4 million by the end of the first three days of the year.

The festivities left three elderly people dead in Tokyo Friday and Saturday when they choked while eating

sticky rice cake, a New Year delicacy, medical officials said. Six others were taken to hospital with the same problem.

In a New Year message released Friday, Akihito reflected on Japan's worst postwar recession as well as floods and other natural disasters which have dogged the nation in the past year.

"What is weighing heavily on my mind is the growing difficulty in the people's livelihood due to developments in the economic situation and the occurrence of natural disasters," he said.

"Under such conditions, I feel it is becoming more and more important for further cooperation, transcending national boundaries, in various fields such as the world economy and the global environment," he added.

Speeches by the emperor must be devoid of any political significance after the imperial family were restrict-

ed to purely ceremonial duties after World War II when Hirohito renounced his status as commander-in-chief and a demigod.

There is a busy year ahead for Akihito, who vowed not to cut back his official duties when he marked his 65th birthday on December 23.

He will attend ceremonies marking the 10th anniversary of Hirohito's death on January 7. The Imperial couple will also celebrate the 40th anniversary of their marriage.

He has also been invited to visit Seoul in 2000, before the two neighbouring nations co-host the football World Cup 2002, to put their bitter past behind them.

But the Tokyo government reportedly remains cautious about such an unprecedented visit amid lingering public resentment in South Korea against Japan's colonial rule over the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Princess Anne busiest of British royals

LONDON (R) — Princess Anne was the busiest member of Britain's Royal Family in 1998, clocked up the most official engagements, a survey showed on Saturday. Queen Elizabeth had a much less active year in 1998 — her number of official engagements dropped by nearly a fifth. The London Times survey, compiled by Tim O'Donovan, shows the queen's daughter to be top of the "busy-league" in 1998 with 679 engagements. "She is a jolly hard worker. She tears around all over the place," O'Donovan said. "But the work rate of the royal family remains remarkably high, considering that more than half of its adult members are over the age at which many people retire."

26 injured in fire in Austria

VIENNA (AFP) — Twenty six people, including four children, were taken to hospital suffering from smoke inhalation after a fire overnight in the basement of a block of flats in Wels, in central Austria, police said Saturday. It was not immediately known what started the fire, which filled the four-story building with smoke. Fire fighters pumped air into the stairwells, enabling nine people to make their own way out. Another 17 were evacuated via ladders.

Bomb explodes in Indonesian department store, no injuries

JAKARTA (AP) — A bomb exploded early Saturday in an empty department store in Indonesia's capital city, destroying goods, shattering windows and damaging a van in front of the building. There were no injuries in the 5 a.m. blast at the Ramayana store in downtown Jakarta, police said. They did not speculate on a motive. Officers found and deactivated two other bombs at the site, which is less than a kilometre from the presidential palace. According to police statistics, armed robberies and other crimes rose 10 per cent in 1997 as millions of people lost their jobs in Indonesia's worst economic crisis in decades. Political tension remains high following the ouster in May of former authoritarian President Suharto after riots and protests. Authorities are concerned about security as rival political forces jostle for influence ahead of parliamentary elections next June.

Swiss tourist missing on Indonesian hiking trip

JAKARTA (AFP) — Authorities have launched a search for a Swiss tourist believed missing on a lone hiking trip up a volcano on Indonesia's Sumatra island, a press report said Saturday. Marc Affarel had set off alone on Dec. 15 to climb the 3,805-metre Kerinci Mountain in the Kerinci Seblat National Park, despite a temporary ban on climbing the mountain following volcanologists reports that the volcano was active. He had been scheduled to return Thursday, according to staff at the hotel where he had stayed, the Antara state news agency said. Dwi Sutanto, an official from the park, said Affarel's flashlight had been found at a height of 2,700 metres. "We hope to be able to give a report... in the next three days," Sutanto was quoted by Antara as saying. Landslides and heavy rains have also been reported from the area of the park in the past week.

Thirty-three Brazilian prisoners on the run

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) — Forty-three prisoners broke out of a Rio prison early Friday but 10 were later recaptured as they travelled north on a bus, police sources said. A preliminary investigation was focusing on the role of the prison guards in allowing the inmates to flee with their weapons. The prison, Todos os Santos, has a maximum capacity of 60 but currently houses 173 prisoners.

Fishing boat with six crewmen still missing in northern Russian lake

MOSCOW (AP) — A fishing boat with six crew aboard was missing Saturday on Russia's northern Lake Lagoda, a news report said. Search crews, using a helicopter and boats, have hunted for the fishing vessel since it vanished Dec. 31 on the massive lake, according to the ITAR-TASS news agency. The boat was believed to have disappeared off the lake's north-western coast, but no trace of it has been found, ITAR-TASS said. Lake Lagoda is located near Russia's second largest city, St. Petersburg.

Quake rattles eastern Taiwan

TAIPEI (AFP) — An earthquake measuring 4.1 on the Richter scale rocked eastern Taiwan Saturday, but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, seismologists said. The tremor struck at 5:15 p.m. (0915 GMT), with its epicentre located 32.2 kilometres northeast of Hualien in eastern Taiwan. It originated 11.4 kilometres under the earth's surface. Another quake of the same intensity hit eastern Taiwan Thursday. Taiwan sits on an earthquake belt but most quakes are centred deep below the surface, toning down their destructive strength. A quake measuring at 6.2 on the Richter scale hit southern Chiayi county in July killing five people and injuring 26. Seismologists have warned southern Taiwan could be in for a potentially devastating tremor following a relatively calm 30-year activity cycle. In 1964, a quake in Pailin in southern Taiwan claimed 106 lives and injured 650 people.

Two dead in Canadian retirement home fire

HALIFAX, Canada (AFP) — Two people died when a blaze swept through a retirement home during a New Year's Eve celebration, firefighters said Friday. Fire spokesman Tom Silver said that 24 people suffered from smoke inhalation and were taken to hospital. None appeared to have life-threatening injuries. The fire erupted shortly before 8 p.m. (0100 GMT Friday) on the second floor of the building that is home to about 300 people, he said.

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The Thai Airways International PCL float, which is named 'The Kingdom of Thailand', is shown during the 110th Annual Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena. 106 floats took part in the parade (Reuters photo)

Chinese dissidents say opposition party would monitor ruling Communists

BEIJING (AP) — Dissidents planning to form an independent labour party in China said Saturday that their group would simply monitor the ruling Communist Party instead of seeking its ouster from power.

Organisers of the China Labour Party said the group would expel any members who obtained government positions, according to a statement received by foreign news agencies in Beijing.

"Our party's responsibility will be to monitor the Chinese Communist Party and represent the working class. We want to see if we, who have declared we will never seek political power... will also be persecuted with the charge of 'subverting state power,'" the statement said.

Plans for the party have emerged several weeks into a crackdown on dissent that has resulted in lengthy prison terms for leaders of a would-be opposition group called the China Democracy Party, who were accused of attempting to subvert state power.

Organisers of the new China Labour Party said they planned to register their group with the Civil Affairs Ministry in Beijing on April 19.

"If the authorities refuse to treat our application in a lawful manner, I will radically commit suicide in order to express my desperate anger and protest," read the statement, signed by a dissident named Li Yongning.

Chinese law requires all organisations to be registered with the government, although applications by dissidents are usually rejected.

Attempts to register the China Democracy Party in many provinces and cities failed, and dozens of those associated with the group have been detained in the government's harshest clampdown on dissent in three years.

The China Labour Party statement said the group would lobby the government to re-register all bank accounts in order to root out illegal accounts used to embezzle public money.

It also said the government should halt state-owned enterprise reforms while it sets up a mechanism for public oversight of the restructuring process.

For the sake of the urban poor, many of whom have lost their jobs due to government economic reforms, it demanded that the government provide a minimum living allowance and ensure enough income for food, housing and medical treatment.

Extremely wary of any movement combining political opposition and labour activism amid fears of unrest among the growing number of unemployed, Communist Party leaders have vowed to quash challenges to party rule.

The crackdown precedes several major political milestones this year, including the 10th anniversary of the military assault on protesters in Tiananmen Square and the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Communist-led government.

Last month, Xu Wenli, a veteran activist, was sentenced to 13 years in prison.

Two other influential figures in the China Democracy Party, Qin Yongmin and Wang Youcai, were sentenced in separate trials to 12 years and 11 years. All three were charged with the same crime: inciting the subversion of state power.

Despite the crackdown, members of the China Democracy Party and another dissident group, the China Development Union, have issued New Year statements calling for political reforms, the release of political prisoners and recognition of opposition political groups, a Hong Kong-based human rights group said Saturday.

The China Development Union also urged the government to establish a free electoral system, to compensate the families of people killed or injured during the suppression of the Tiananmen protests and to give greater autonomy to Tibet, the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said in a statement.

Indian Hindu nationalists bid to shore up battered image

BANGALORE, India (AFP) — India's ruling Hindu nationalist party began a two-day meeting of its top body here Saturday to discuss ways of shoring up its battered image and to focus on growing attacks on Christians.

The president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party, Kushabhau Thakre, told the national executive of the party that the role which the BJP suffered during the recent provincial polls was a "setback."

The main opposition Congress party wrested New Delhi city and Rajasthan state from the BJP, and retained Madhya Pradesh state to deliver the nationalists a shocking defeat in the Nov. 25 polls.

"The results of the assembly elections were contrary to our expectations... an electoral setback, no matter how severe, cannot be a full stop. It is at best a comma. It gives us a chance to learn," Thakre said.

He called on members of the party's top body to "rededicate" themselves to "regain lost ground."

Thakre said the BJP lost in the polls because of a sharp

increase in the prices of commodities, "organisational deficiencies and the unfortunate tendency among some of us to put ourselves above the party's interests."

Thakre chief admitted the Congress "has emerged looking stronger than before" after the election success under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, widow of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi.

"The BJP and the Congress appear to be emerging as the two principal poles of Indian politics," he said, but warned Congress that the "unabashed promotion of dynasty over democracy" would not pay results.

The coalition government of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who himself belongs to the BJP, has been wracked by infighting since it took office in March.

Fragility of the coalition and growing dissatisfaction with the BJP has sparked fears that the 545-member Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament, may be dissolved soon and fresh elections held.

The image of the government took a beating when

Hindu hardliners within the BJP demanded the teaching of Hindu religious philosophy in schools and stepped up attacks on churches and Christian-run schools.

The headline Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council), closely linked to the ruling Hindu nationalists, is bitterly anti-Muslim and anti-Christian and seeks to make India a theocratic Hindu state.

Thakre distanced himself from the extremist violence and said that the BJP's stand "is clear. This is not a good thing to happen in a democracy."

He said there was "a charge that a grand conspiracy is afoot against India's Christian community. Nothing could be further from the truth. There have been some sporadic incidents which are condemnable."

The attacks by hardliners have been a source of embarrassment to the BJP government, which is being forced to tread a fine line between the communal demands of its Hindu revivalist allies and India's secular constitution.

Christians account for just 2.5 percent of India's overwhelmingly Hindu population

of 975 million people. Christians say attacks by Hindu zealots have increased since the BJP came to power. Most of the attacks have occurred in the western state of Gujarat.

In New Delhi a four-member congress delegation, led by leader of opposition in parliament's upper house, Manmohan Singh, met Indian President Narayanan and said the attacks on Christians were a "well-planned campaign" by Hindu hardliners.

The delegation said the BJP-ruled Gujarat government "was clearly guilty of failing to fulfill its minimum constitutional duties to protect the minorities."

"The flow of aggressive statements and destructive actions must stop immediately. The state government must commit itself to a specific action plan to prevent such events from recurring," the delegation said in a letter to the president.

The national executive of the BJP Sunday is expected to adopt two resolutions on political situation in the country and the economy.

Military courts to try Pakistan ethnic party deputies on murder charges

KARACHI (AFP) — Seven activists from the ethnic Muttahida Qasmi Movement (MQM), including three provincial deputies, will be tried by Pakistan military courts on murder charges, officials said Saturday.

They will be the first MQM activists to face trial by military courts since the government introduced the tribunals early last month in a crackdown on terrorism and violence in Karachi.

The three deputies — Kazi Khalid, Zulfiqar Haider and Liaquat Qureshi — have been

in hiding and will be tried in absentia. The rest of the seven accused are in police custody.

MQM represents the Mohajir community made up of Muslims who migrated from India after the partition of the sub-continent in 1947 and settled in southern Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital.

The party broke a political alliance with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in October when he accused it of involvement in the murder of a former provincial governor Hakim Mohammad Saeed.

Sharif dismissed the elected government in Sindh following the split with the MQM and clamped direct federal rule on the region. He later set up military courts for speedy trials.

The MQM alleges that the government campaign is aimed at crushing it.

The first death sentence ordered by a military court was carried out on Thursday when a man convicted of killing a police constable was hanged in a Karachi jail.

Opposition parties have condemned the execution, pointing out that petitions challeng-

ing the formation of military courts were pending in the Supreme Court and the Sindh high court.

Sharif said here Friday the military courts were performing satisfactorily and criminals were being given the punishment they deserved.

He said the law and order situation in Karachi had improved as a result of the steps taken by the government.

The largest Pakistani city has seen more than 3,500 killings over the past three years in political, ethnic and religious violence.

Death toll rises to 20 in Nigerian oil protest

PORT HARCOURT (AFP) — Seven more deaths increased the death toll to 20 late Friday in protests by militant Ijaw youths in Nigeria's oil-rich Bayelsa state, sources told AFP here on Saturday.

Hundreds of residents continue to flee from troubled Yenagoa, the Bayelsa state capital, while soldiers and anti-riot policemen have been deployed to the area.

Three youths died on Wednesday in clashes with soldiers in Yenagoa, as they marched on government offices following the expiration on Dec. 30 of their ultimatum to oil companies to quit their operations in Nigeria's Niger-Delta region.

In the ultimatum by 500 Ijaw communities, they vowed to free their communities from "enslavement" by the government and "demanded that oil companies should stop exploration and exploitation activities in Izon [Ijaw] land."

The Ijaws, who are Nigeria's fourth largest ethnic group, say the oil companies should stay off Ijaw areas till the issue of "ownership and control of the vast oil deposits is determined." A state of emergency declared on Wednesday in the state following repeated clashes between the armed forces and protesting youths remains in force.

The village, which used to be known as George River because it lies at the mouth of the river, was established in 1838 as a Hudson's Bay Company trading post.

Kangiqsuallujuaq means "very big bay" in the Inuktitut language.

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U.N. looking into report of Angola plane survivors

LUANDA (R) — The United Nations mission in Angola said Saturday it was investigating reports that survivors from a crashed U.N. plane were in the hands of rebels.

Angolan state radio said the rebel National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) was holding the survivors at a base near the central city of Huambo.

Hamadon Toure, spokesman for the U.N. Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) told Reuters: "We are investigating. It is not confirmed yet from our side."

He said the fighting and the jungle terrain made it difficult to gather information.

UNITA officials were not immediately available to confirm whether the group was holding any survivors.

The chartered transport plane went down a week ago in dense jungle near Vila Nova, 25 km from Huambo, where UNITA rebels have government forces under siege.

Fierce fighting around Huambo, Angola's second

largest city, and in other areas has shattered Angola's 1994 peace accord and pointed to a resumption of the civil war, which started at independence from Portugal in 1975.

Angolan army spokesman Brigadier Jose Manuel Jota told state radio he had information the survivors "are under (UNITA leader) Jonas Savimbi's custody somewhere in the Andulo or Bailundo areas."

He did not know how many of 10 passengers and four crew of the C130 Hercules

had survived the crash. Thursday, the U.N. Security Council demanded that the Angolan government and UNITA help in the search for the South African-owned plane.

The government has said it is willing to help but UNITA said it had received no request from the U.N.

The wreckage has been spotted by high-altitude aircraft but no one has been allowed near the site in an area presumed to be under UNITA control.

Nine dead, 25 hurt in Quebec avalanche

KANGIQSUALLUJUAQ, Quebec (AP) — A wall of snow crashed down on a New Year's celebration in a remote Inuit village in northern Quebec, killing nine people, including five children, and injuring 25 when it broke through a school gymnasium wall, police said.

Six people died shortly after Friday's avalanche in the coastal village of Kangiqsuallujuaq, in an Inuit region 1,500 kilometres northeast of Montreal.

Three other victims — a mother, her young daughter and son — were discovered several hours later buried under tonnes of snow, said Luc Harvey, chief of the Kativik regional police force in Kuujuaq, 300 kilometres west of the village.

"It was like an explosion," school principal Jean Leduc said. "You heard an immense crack and the wall was flying into pieces and the next thing you knew, the gym was entirely covered in snow."

"People were looking for their kids, their husbands, wives and parents," Leduc said. "They began to cry and scream."

"There were a few seconds of panic... after that people started to get a grip on themselves and found tools right there to try to pull bodies out of the snow. A lot

were alive because (the snow) was very fresh and, as time went on, some were not alive."

Police said they had accounted for everyone and called off the search. Five of the victims were under the age of eight and four were adults, police said.

The toll could have been much worse — between 400 and 500 people were packed into the gym when the avalanche struck shortly before 2 a.m. Friday.

Twenty-five people were injured, 10 of them seriously. The exact cause of the avalanche was still being debated early Saturday. Speculation centered on a ceremonial gun salute about 90 minutes before the avalanche that might have loosened snow on a nearby hill.

Mayor Maggie Emudluk said people were celebrating at midnight and then took part in a 40-minute square dance. The celebration is an integral part of the evening that also boasts a large feast of caribou, seal, fish and hammock.

Emudluk remembers she looked at her watch at about 1:25 a.m. and that the avalanche started about 20 minutes later.

"It sounded like thunder, but only for a few seconds," a shaken Emudluk told a news conference. "I gave someone my shovel,

people were frantic," said teacher Anne Lantier. "I took a frying-pan and I was digging with a frying-pan."

Mary Baron, the school's director, was sitting with her 3-year-old son Matthew during a drawing for a door prize when snow smashed through the gym wall.

"Everybody was screaming," she said. "I wasn't buried completely and right away went to dig out my son."

Baron said several people around her were also half-buried and they struggled out of the snow to help others buried nearby.

Before the last body was recovered, local residents had dug frantically through snow that slid down the 75-metre hill and punched through the wall of the school gym, Harvey said. The force of the avalanche crushed pickup trucks and snowmobiles.

Residents faced a fierce snowstorm, 95 kph wind and minus 20 Celsius temperatures looking for those buried under snow up to 3 metres deep.

Billy May, a heavy-equipment operator, was among those who helped retrieve the bodies.

"A friend of mine lost two kids and his wife. We just found them... We're really a close-knit community," the locals were joined later by police and doctors

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

A Non-Governmental Organisation working in the field of sustainable human development, including income-generating projects, empowerment of local communities, access to credit at the local level, the provision of training, and issues of child welfare is inviting interested individuals to submit applications for the position of General Director for its various projects.

Reporting to the Chairperson of the Board, the specific responsibilities of the General Director include, but are not limited to, the following:

- To manage and coordinate all implementation aspects of the organisation on a day-to-day basis;
- To prepare annual work-plans and budgets and monitor their progress;
- To monitor all of the organisation's activities including: evaluation of proposals, procurement of goods, selection of consultants, awarding of contracts, disbursement of funds, budgeting, and achievement of indicators and expected outputs;
- To select, after consultation with the Chairperson, in accordance with competitive hiring procedures, and manage all staff and ensure their proper training and readiness;
- To liaise with all parties and stakeholders involved in the implementation of the organisation's projects, local or foreign;
- To ensure the effective transfer of skills to the organisation's staff;
- To facilitate and expedite the provision of required services to ensure efficient performance of project's tasks;
- To represent the organisation vis-a-vis all relevant parties including governmental ministries, NGOs, research centres, and the donor community;
- To submit quarterly progress reports and budget expenditures to the Board;
- To act as a secretary to the Board;
- To carry out other related tasks as may be reasonably requested by the Board.

The incumbent must have a Master's Degree in Economics, Social Sciences, Management, Business Studies or a relevant discipline, with a good command of English and Arabic communication and presentation skills (speaking, reading, and report writing). He/she must have had a minimum of five years of experience in the planning, supervision or execution of social or private sector projects or related involvement. Literacy in computer application is a must. The jobholder is expected to demonstrate solid and genuine commitment to developmental objectives, and often work under pressure.

All applications (including resume and cover letter) should be received no later than January 7th, 1999 either by fax or mail. Short-listed candidates will be expected to take a written exam and appear before an interview panel.

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Fax No.: 461-3083

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.
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Facsimile: Editorial: 5696183, Advertising: 5693337

E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo

Web Site: <http://www.access2arabia.com/jordantimes/>

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

New year, renewed hopes

THE YEAR 1999 promises to be an eventful one. On the national scene, His Majesty King Hussein will return to the country, God willing, completely recovered after more than six months of treatment in the U.S. All Jordanians are waiting impatiently for the King's return and the impact of his return on the Kingdom will be immeasurable.

On the regional level, Israel will conduct elections for a new parliament and a new prime minister. The odds favour an effective change of leadership which will consequently push the peace process forward. The last three years of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rule saw the peace talks with the Palestinians frustrated, and the prime minister unable to implement agreements. Any change in Israel offers new hope for comprehensive peace between Israel and the Arabs.

On the Iraqi front, there is growing realisation that the region cannot afford any further procrastination on the resolution of the crisis. After last month's aerial and missile strikes against Iraq, the stage is set for an effective resolution of the standoff between Baghdad and Washington. There is also hope that sanctions on Libya will end this year. Tripoli on the one hand, and Washington and London on the other, seem to be on the verge of agreement on the terms for the trial of the two Libyan nationals accused of blowing up a Pan Am plane over Lockerbie in 1988.

Internationally, the eyes of the world will be focused on the impeachment proceeding against President Bill Clinton expected to be long and drawn out. As long as the future of Clinton remains unresolved, international stability will certainly suffer. President Clinton's alleged brush with the law has affected not only the American people, but also the world at large.

On another front, the landmark Landmine Ban Convention is expected to come to force in 1999 after more than 53 countries ratified it. This will indeed be good news for the campaigners who have pinned great hopes on the treaty, adopted in Ottawa in December 1997, to end the widespread and indiscriminate deaths caused by millions of anti-personnel mines scattered all over the world. Likewise, the International Criminal Court is expected to come into being in 1999 after an increasing number of countries have already signed and ratified its statute. This would be a great achievement for the cause of humanitarian law.

The introduction of the new European currency, the euro, is obviously a dramatic event not only for the concerned European states but for the global economy as a whole. There is a growing consensus that the euro will bring greater stability to currency markets everywhere and therefore will be a positive development for international trade and commerce.

Yet the picture for 1999 is not going to be all rosy. The conflict in Kosovo will go on simmering throughout the new year. The African continent is expected to witness additional warfare and armed conflicts. Southeast Asia's economies may not recover from 1998's near meltdown. The cause of democracy and human rights in several south Asian countries remains troubled and vulnerable. The same goes for some parts of Latin America where stability and the rule of law remain absent. The socio-economic woes which haunt that continent cannot be expected to fizzle out in just one year.

But with each new year, new hope for better tidings shines through the hearts and souls of mankind everywhere.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Dustour said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent statements and decision to destroy Lebanon's infrastructure and economy if it attacks Israel's northern settlement renew the issue of the 25-year-old Israeli objectives in that country. These aims include minimising Lebanon's regional role, robbing it of natural resources and destroying its national power, said an editorial. Nobody agrees with attacking civilians, but even the blind can appreciate that Lebanon's resistance is a self-defence against Israeli missiles, the paper added. Netanyahu's stubborn decision, in fact, aims to support his election campaign, said the editorial. The newspapers called on the international community and the Arabs to stop any aggression that could destroy Lebanon's years of hard work.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket reviewed 1998's incidents. Last year, he said, Jordan witnessed the water contamination crisis, the restructuring programme's failure and an increase in economic depression, unemployment and poverty. On the Palestinian front, Israel pursued stubborn policies to guarantee peace on its own terms through forcing more Palestinian concessions. The intifada has been renewed to face settlements' expansion. Sanctions are still imposed on Iraq, Libya and Sudan. International oil prices have dropped causing a deep economic crisis for oil states. Saket said the formation in mid-1998 of a new Jordanian government, promised to implement the national dialogue. The recent U.S.-British air strikes against Iraq failed to achieve their objectives while the Arab nations strongly condemned the aggression and called on their governments to end the embargo. For the first time since the U.S. unilateral role in the new world order, the whole world disagrees with the superpower's policies and domination.

Resistance to privatisation must be overcome

PUBLIC OPINION in Jordan is not enthusiastic about privatisation. However, this negative attitude is not monopolised by Jordanians. In fact, all peoples in the Third World resist privatisation to a certain extent and at various degrees.

Any observer of Jordanian public opinion will not miss this fact. Resistance to the idea is sometimes due to predetermined ideological convictions which are very difficult to change, and sometimes due to legitimate doubts and fears which must be cleared and answered. They may also be attributed to deep and irrational impressions resulting from fear of change which must be corrected.

Jordanians' negative perception may be, to some extent, responsible for the slow-down and continued delay in the implementation of a comprehensive privatisation

programme. However, we claim that the real obstacle facing privatisation drive is not public opinion per se, but the exaggeration of public resistance and the overstatement of the public's potential response. This naturally frightens politicians eager to maintain their popularity.

In the rare cases when the government actually made a firm decision to privatise and carried through, the resistance faded away, having been proven impotent. Those opposed to privatisation might frown at the news, but have tended to let transactions proceed unhindered, as was the case when the government sold its shares in Jordan Inter-Continental Hotel to the private sector, and again this fall when the government decided to sell one third of the shares of the Jordan Cement Factories Company to a qualified

French strategic partner. In both cases a decision was made, announced, justified, and implemented promptly.

On the contrary, the privatisation of the Jordan Telecommunication Corporation was overruled and effectively killed, not due to popular resistance, but because the government acted slowly. The transaction lingered years without arriving at a clear-cut decision. Lack of resolve on behalf of the government was an open invitation for opponents of privatisation to raise their voices and become more aggressive, which gave cover to special interest parties seeking to kill the project, at least for the time being, in the process hurting the credibility of the government and its privatisation plans in the eyes of interested strategic partners and potential foreign

Sunday's Economic Pulse



Dr. Fahed Fanek

investors. The government in general, and its economic team in particular, together with the Executive Unit of Privatisation in the Prime Ministry, are required to make real efforts to gain the support of

the public opinion in favour of privatisation, or at least to neutralise groups that have no vested interest in resisting privatisation. Public opinion is definitely an important factor and should not be ignored, but its resistance should not be overestimated.

The fate of the country's privatisation programme depends first and foremost on the behaviour of the government. It can succeed and prevail if it displays the political will to make decisions and follow up by prompt implementation. The Jordanian economy, at the time, has been in deep recession for quite some years. No one is happy about the current situation or ready to defend the status quo. This is an ideal time to introduce major changes including privatisation. There is nothing to fear except higher unemployment and a further spread of poverty.



The introduction of the euro; history in the making

By Umayya Toukan

AS OF the first day of the New Year, 1999, the single European currency, the euro, is the legal tender in 11 European countries, namely Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Finland, Ireland, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The other four country members of the European Union, namely the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden and Greece are, for the moment, outside the euro zone. While the United Kingdom, Sweden and Denmark have chosen not to join the euro club for the time being, Greece did not qualify according to what is known as the "convergence criteria" conditions. These conditions which form an integral part of the Maastricht Treaty signed in February 1992, relate to the real rate of interest and exchange rate fluctuations, both considered traditionally within the domain of monetary policy, and to the fiscal government budget deficit as well as the level of government debt, but considered traditionally within the domain of fiscal policy. In brief then, the convergence criteria refer to monetary and to fiscal policies of member states. More specifically, four convergence criteria have been established:

1. Member states must avoid excessive government deficits. Their performance is measured against two reference ratios: 3 per cent of GDP for the annual government budget deficit and 60 per cent of GDP for the stock of government debt.
2. Inflation should not exceed by more than 1.5 percentage points that of the three best performing member states in terms of price stability in the previous year.
3. The country's currency must have remained within the normal fluctuation margins of the European Monetary System (EMS) for at least two years.
4. Long-term interest rates should not exceed by more than 2 percentage points the average of the three member states with the lowest rates in the union.

The fact that (14) member states have already qualified for the euro is an indication that the above conditions are attainable. Furthermore, the available evidence suggests that the above conditions may have an adverse effect, in the short and medium run at least, on the level of employment and economic growth. Thus, decisions regarding the euro have incorporated a high degree of political will and public debate not only on the grounds of economic outcomes but also on the grounds of the trade-off between national sovereignty and regional identity.

The changeover from national currencies to the euro will take place over three stages:

1. STAGE I, which in effect start and ends on January 1, 1999. During this stage, conversion rates between the national currencies and the EURO are to be irrevocably fixed. This important step already took place at 12:30 on 31/12/1998 in Brussels. The European finance and economics ministers signed this irrevocable commitment in a meeting of the Council of Ministers of the European Union. Outside the building of the Council of Ministers in Brussels, big celebrations took place by the public to commemorate this historic event (for actual conversion rates see box). STAGE I will also witness the coming into force of all Legislation related to the EURO. Final STAGE I involves the switch to the EURO in the European money and foreign exchange markets. While most people will be celebrating the New Year over a long weekend, the banking industry will be celebrating the New Year in their offices implementing the switch of all bank accounts and monetary instruments to the EURO. On New Year's Eve, European television stations showed banks' employees, all over Europe, behind their terminals effecting the switch over to the EURO.

2. STAGE II, which is in effect the transition period and extends from January 1, 1999 - December 31, 2001. During this period, the newly-established European Central Bank in Frankfurt will start its operations. All financial markets (equity and bond markets) will convert their issues to Euro. During the transition period, the EURO can be used for all non-cash transactions and anyone can have a EURO bank account.
3. STAGE III, which is the final stage and covers the period January 1, 2002 to July 1, 2002 at the latest. During this final stage EURO bank notes and coins will be brought into circulation while national currency notes and coins will be withdrawn gradually. By July 1, 2002, the transition will be complete and national currency notes and coins will no longer be legal tender.

Thus by July 1, 2002, the process of European integration which started back in 1957 with the Treaty of Rome would be completed. The name of the single currency, "euro," was actually agreed upon during a European meeting of the Council of Ministers in Madrid December 1995. At the time, Euro-skeptics said the idea would never materialise in our lifetime.

It may be early to draw lessons from this historic achievement. However, few factors dictate themselves:

1. The coordination of fiscal policies amongst different countries can be achieved. Perhaps, more significantly, a single monetary policy for countries with different endowments, size, and economic performance is possible. This is a breakthrough in traditional wisdom. The historical evidence has always suggested that it is not so easy to coordinate fiscal and monetary policies within the same country. Our experience in Jordan and in particular the episode of 1989 support that evidence.
2. Fiscal discipline and a sound monetary policy may produce in the short run adverse effects on employment and economic growth. This is also supported by our experience in Jordan. Strong political will and public understanding and support become essential ingredients for the success of any adjustment package. These elements have clearly been present in the European integration experience.

Important questions arise as to the impact of the EURO on international trade and in particular on developing countries such as Jordan. European productivity and efficiency, the role of the U.S. dollar, and the globalization of world economy in general. These are all justified and important concerns and I will try to address them in subsequent essays.

The writer is Jordan's ambassador in Brussels

Irrevocable conversion rates between the euro and 11 European currencies as of January 1, 1999.

One euro

- = 40.3399 Belgian Francs
- = 2.20371 Dutch Guilders
- = 40.3399 Luxembourg Francs
- = 5.94573 Finnish Markka
- = 0.787564 Irish Pound
- = 1.93627 Italian Liras
- = 13.7603 Austrian Shillings
- = 6.55957 French Francs
- = 1936.27 Italian Liras
- = 166.386 Spanish Pesta.
- = 200.482 Portuguese Escudos

Raising the stakes in Yemen

By Dr. Musa Keilani

WHEN I WAS in Yemen a few years ago, as a guest of Dr. Magaleh of Sanaa University, the jocular suggestion to travel agents how better to advertise tour packages in Yemen was to publish "EXOTIC" days in Yemen. KIDNAPPING guaranteed. But the comedy was completely shattered with Tuesday's tragedy where at least four hostages were killed in a rescue operation mounted by Yemeni security forces.

Until Monday, abductions in Yemen had been a ridiculous affair. The common belief was that all any tribe with any grievance had to do was to keep a close watch on roads running through its domain and stop vehicles most likely to carry foreign tourists. Bingo, they had a bargaining chip to use against the government.

None of the "hostages" involved in the dozens of "kidnap-and-release" dramas had come to any harm before. If anything, many of the hostages had apparently enjoyed their days in captivity where they were treated with respect and were exposed to traditional tribal hospitality in the most natural environment of a typical Yemeni village. A great experience for the adventurous spirit, particularly given that a typical tourist would pay an arm and a leg to the tour agent if they were to ask for a few days in traditional surroundings.

It was even suggested that Yemeni tribes could strike it rich if they were to agree with tour operators to include an offer of a few days of life in captivity for tourists as part of the tour package. But the latest episode changed all that. Most people had expected the Yemeni authorities to take a wait-and-see approach until the kidnappers could be persuaded to release their captives. But something went wrong some place.

The easy argument is that the Sanaa government, frustrated by being at the receiving end of ridicule as well as the potential threat to the \$100 million tourism revenues it makes every year, was determined to make good its warning that kidnappings would not be tolerated after imposing the death penalty for abductors.

Indeed, the Yemen authorities have explained that security forces moved in when the kidnappers, believed to have been members of an underground extremist group, started killing hostages. That account has been questioned.

Whether it was wise on the part of the government to mount a rescue operation or whether it was warranted is subject to question. Whatever the outcome of inquiries, the reality is that four of the hostages lost their life and two others were seriously injured.

Beyond that, however, is the implication of the kidnap drama. It was the first time a kidnap group had raised political demands: the release of an Islamist leader and (ridiculous as it is) an end to the international sanctions against Iraq. Until Monday, demands of Yemeni tribes taking hostages were for new roads, power connections, water supply, hospitals, bridges, schools, and even a public telephone. Other demands included pub-

lic sector jobs, compensation for not building a road, amnesty for a death-row convict and release of petty criminals, and, indeed, the arrest of someone who was accused of cheating an entire village in a car deal.

No gun has ever been used against a tourist in Yemen, but the country is awash with weapons ranging from small pistols to machine-guns which can be bought in grocery stores in the countryside. It is estimated that there are at least 50 million firearms in a country of nearly 15 million people.

For a Yemeni from the countryside, many Yemenis say, parting with his gun is more painful than a death in family.

The abundance of firearms and the "sense of power" that it offers are often cited as one of the reasons that encourage Yemeni tribes to go for kidnapping. They have no political agenda, but civil or financial grievances. In some cases, arbitrary use of their land by foreign oil companies was cited as the reason for kidnappings.

The impact of the tragic end to the latest abduction on another ongoing hostage drama involving four German tourists is not obvious. The "ransom" demanded for them was said to include something like \$650,000 in cash, luxury cars, houses, high military posts and government jobs for members of the tribe behind the kidnap.

It was also reported that the German authorities have pleaded to Sanaa not to use force to release the four.

Indeed, it is strictly an internal affair. President Ali Abdullah Saleh has been hard at work knitting together the tribes scattered throughout the country into a national fabric and it can easily be understood why and how his options are limited in a land where lawlessness reigned for many decades.

Particularly interesting is that the latest incident took place in Abyan province, a reputed stronghold of militants after the 1994 Yemeni civil war during which the country's mainstream Islamist group backed the Saleh government against southern separatists. That Islamists were indeed involved in the kidnap should have been a signal to the Sanaa government that it was no longer one of those "routine" hostage dramas.

It is known that some of those Islamists were operating independently of the Al-Islah party, which has had a largely stable political agreement with Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) until recently. As such, were there any political connections to the incident, with innocent tourists paying the price for an internal Yemeni conflict? What was the role of strained Yemeni relations with Riyadh? Will Washington now support President Saleh more staunchly against opposition parties that used to accuse him of corruption and personal profligacy "la Subano"? Why did the strongest and most prominent Islamic leader in Yemen, Abdul Majid Al-Zendani, condemn the whole massacre and declare that no Islamists would kill his prisoners or captives since it is against Sharia law?

A taste

By Roufan

Mount

Traditions & Survival
 Robert Chendrier
 Canva Press 1997
 96 pages, £19.95

ILLUSTRATED by the rugged mountain peaks and deep valleys of the Caucasus, the Caucasus is a land of contrasts. It is a land of ancient peoples. Each tribe has its own customs, traditions and way of life. The Caucasus is a land of contrasts. It is a land of ancient peoples. Each tribe has its own customs, traditions and way of life. The Caucasus is a land of contrasts. It is a land of ancient peoples. Each tribe has its own customs, traditions and way of life.

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1998 — a year to be rude and crude

By Sue Zeidler
Reuters

IF ANY lessons were learned this year in show business, it was that all those big names that glitter are not gold at the box office, and that rude and crude sells — as does rap.

It was a year in which superstars like Brad Pitt and Oprah Winfrey failed to ignite hits with their much anticipated films "Meet Joe Black" and "Beloved." But Harrison Ford struck a blow for every middle-aged man in America by being named the "Sexiest Man Alive" by People Magazine. And American actress Gwyneth Paltrow proved that you can succeed using either a British or an American accent — as long as you look good.

All sorts of expensive films bit the dust — "Godzilla" failed to frighten anyone in a comeback bid and "Primary Colours" did as poorly at the box office as President Bill Clinton is doing with a Republican Congress.

But make a film in which the hero gets his penis caught in a zip and a fishhook stuck in his cheek and you've got a hit.

The scatological humour of "There's Something About Mary"

churned out profits by the gross and the animated TV hit "South Park," which has vomiting characters and talking dung, earned widespread mass appeal.

Talk about not for the squeamish: World War II came thundering back with a vengeance with Steven Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan" hailed by public and critics alike for recreating the horrors of war as few other films ever have. And an Italian film comedy about Hitler's death camps, "Life is Beautiful," won international awards.

The success of blunt in-your-face rawness carried over into music even though many record executives donned suits and tried to put on a big show for Wall Street this year as the industry turned ever more corporate with one major company swallowing another.

But the real superstars in music in 1998 were the "rap pack" entrepreneurs who turned out innovative and lucrative hits with the help of heavy street marketing.

"God knows, the movie studios spend tonnes of money to successfully predict the marketplace, but they often fail," said Ted Rosenblatt, president of Los Angeles-based PFG Entertainment, which finances and

licenses the rights to independent films.

"A perfect indication was that some stars just couldn't open movies," he said, citing Pitt and "Meet Joe Black," a film that cost about \$80 million to make, but has taken only about \$40 million since opening in mid-November.

The film was one of several box office disappointments this year for Seagram's Universal Studios, where several high-level heads have rolled as a result, giving Hollywood a real-life soap opera of its own.

Conversely, experts noted the latest Jim Carrey film "The Truman Show," a much-praised satire, was a hit even though his last attempt at drama was the 1996 box office disappointment "The Cable Guy." "The last Jim Carrey movie (Truman) succeeded because it was a good movie and not because it was a typical Jim Carrey comedy," Rosenblatt said.

"Big stars no longer guarantee an audience. People are looking at the material and the story and the overall quality of the pictures," said Jay Cooper, an entertainment lawyer.

Teenage-heartthrob Leonardo DiCaprio's appearance in Woody Allen's "Celebrity" failed to cause a

stir despite his 1997 smash hit "Titanic." And while actress Julia Roberts still commands as much as \$17 million for a romantic comedy, her run as reigning box office queen may soon be usurped by Cameron Diaz, who is riding the wave of silly success from "There's Something About Mary." Ben Stiller, who played Diaz' suitor in the low-brow, low-budget comedy about a young man's quest for his long-lost dream date, has also become a Hollywood heavyweight.

Another surprising success story is Adam Sandler, who turned from box office lightweight to superstar overnight with surprising hits like "The Waterboy" and "The Wedding Singer." 1998 was the year every expert predicted that Will Smith, a rapper, would soon become one of the screen's biggest stars.

U.S. television's year was dominated by quirky drama and animation, led by the offbeat hit comedy-drama "Ally McBeal" about a bony, neurotic, single lawyer, and "South Park." "I think people are looking for something unique and not the same old formula in television. The ratings go into the toilet if it's the same old thing and that's why 'South Park' and 'Ally McBeal'

broke through this year," said Cooper.

Gimmicky shows or programmes about the complexities of relationships showed the greatest growth in the number of viewers on the small screen with "Ally McBeal," the legal drama "The Practice" and "Buffy The Vampire Slayer" among the year's biggest winners.

It was a year in which the popular "Seinfeld," the show about nothing, went off the air amid a storm of publicity or "much ado about nothing." And it was a year in which bad taste seemed to dominate the daytime airwaves with controversy over reality talk shows going too far — like the frequent fistfights on "The Jerry Springer Show." The biggest merger in music history — the marriage between Seagram's Universal Music Group and PolyGram <PLG.AS> — shook an industry now run largely by big conglomerates who churn out hits to boost stock prices.

And while music sales for the global \$40 billion industry are poised to show growth for the year overall, the overriding trend on the charts appeared to be a lack of trend. "The trend is no trend in music," said Cooper, whose clients include singer/songwriter Sheryl Crow.

On any given week, the charts are topped with a diverse list of stars ranging from soft-pop singer Celine Dion to heavy metal band Metallica to country stars Garth Brooks and Shania Twain and rap stars Master P and Puff Daddy.

But many believe that if any musical truth emerged in 1998, it was that rap music was under-estimated.

"The trend this year was towards rap music becoming a mainstream genre of music and I believe it will continue in 1999 and be fused with other music forms," said Doug Morris, CEO of the Universal Music Group, now the world's biggest music company.

"It's one of the major acknowledgments that we in the music business have to accept this year. A lot of us thought rap would be limited in its appeal, but record companies have learned a lot from these entrepreneurs who took their music to the streets," Morris added.

Master P and Puff Daddy each earned more than \$50 million this year by performing on and producing their own labels and gaining popularity with heavy but savvy street marketing, word of mouth, posters, web sites and ads.

Books and Culture

The future in a cup

A taste for fortunetelling is sweeping the country, but what can you reasonably expect to hear from a cup-reader

By Roufan Nahhas

AMMAN — I have learnt, mainly from books on science and Murphy's Law, that what is going to happen (that is, if it is meant to happen) will happen, if not today, then tomorrow — so why is everyone so curious to find out what will happen in the future? To find out, and following friends' advice, I found myself in front of a highly recommended cup-reader, a true professional in her field.

Apparently there is nothing fancy to it: if you want to peek into the future, all you need is a cup of coffee, some time to waste and most of all belief: not so much belief in the future as much as disbelief in the present.

Salma, the 22-year-old cup reader I visited, has a dark complexion, wears colourful clothes and sports an enigmatic look about her plain, well-cared-for face. She is well known for dealing in cups of coffee and fate.

The jingling sound of the gold chains around her arms adds that little extra to the atmosphere, so when I slurped down the last

sip of coffee, curiosity, like a gnawing hunger, started grumbling as I waited for secrets from my future to be revealed to me. Whether we believe or not, we all want to know.

Dr. Musa Shraiwi, professor of sociology at the Jordan University says that there has always been a trend by people to want to know the future.

"Ages ago people had this fascination about the unknown, the mysterious. They tried several methods to discover what is in store for them," he said.

A visit to a cup-reader is enough to reveal, not only the future, but also your own naïveté and innocence. Some see in it an escape from their everyday suffering, while others merely view it as a pleasant experience.

University student Yara Eniakat said that she does not believe in fortunetellers at all, but goes there anyway.

"It is all for fun, although sometimes they say things that can be right," she said.

A fish, a rabbit, a long road, financial crises,

death even doomsday can be on a cup-reader's list, whose ranks include both professionals and amateurs. Alia, a 25-old nurse, reads the cups as a hobby.

"We all have long roads ahead of us, problems to face, weddings and funerals to attend, news to hear," she said.

"I know it is nonsense, but we do it for fun, especially when we have nothing to do or we have friends coming for a visit," she added with a smile.

"For some, reading cups is a social activity, for others it is a job that pays no taxes, which is easy to perform, with no strict working hours and most importantly — keeps you and your kids from starving," Shraiwi pointed out.

Professionals such as Salma say that the curved lines and dots of the coffee residue make pictures, and what is significant is what these pictures represent.

"Deciphering these pictures depend on their meaning within a specific society," according to Shraiwi, who added that most fortunetellers make generalisations in order that his

or her 'readings' can apply to anyone.

"Fortunetelling is in many ways a deceptive kind of therapy for those who feel insecure," he said and added that it may give rise to obsessive behaviours in which the fortune teller is constantly consulted over any problem in a person's life: "Whether it is searching for love, wealth or just hope, following this trend can negatively affect peoples lives," he warned [Ronald Reagan: a case in point?]

After some time Salma placed the cup between her slim fingers and started:

"A long straight line; international phone call — some black dots; news that will reach you, unmistakably bad — a smiling face; a baby. Wait, still more to come — a dove; happiness — a hand; a friend trying to help — some clouds; a trouble."

All these fit pretty well into the scheme of things, mine as well as everyone else's, but Salma was good, and soon had me rattled.

"There is a dark cloud; something bothering you, and you can't make a decision to end it." (Yes, that sounds familiar).

"A close person to you lost a friend and this brought tears to your eyes" (How, I thought, could she know this. I was here to write an article but that suddenly seemed secondary).

My eyes grew bigger and bigger with that stare — you know, the one you have while sitting behind the computer and a "system error" message you can't understand forces you to click OK and restart your computer.

I continued to listen without prejudice to her 3 dinars worth of wisdom (no Visa or MasterCard, only cash).

Salma calmly asked me to place my thumb at the bottom of the cup, which I did without a question.

"You have a big heart and a clear mind," she said. (Apparently the thumbprint can reveal your true personality).

But then, if I had a clear mind would I place my destiny in a stranger's hand? To my amazement and disbelief, Salma had made me stop for a second to reconsider my scepticism; for her it was just another satisfied customer.

Mountain lore

Traditions & Survival
Robert Chenciner
Cameron Press 1997
307 pages, £19.95

SITUATED in the rugged mountain peaks and deep valleys of north eastern Caucasus, Daghestan — Persian for the land of the mountains — is the size of Scotland, and is home to 32 distinct peoples. Each of these peoples has their own language, yet they share a surprisingly homogeneous culture that has both withstood over a century of Tsarist control and 70 years of repressive Soviet rule.

Robert Chenciner has travelled extensively throughout the region, and here he gives a fascinating account of the swifly vanishing traditions and ways of life in the villages of this inaccessible mountainous area.

He has tried to record Daghestani culture, defining it by what the Soviets tried to suppress. But seeking out and establishing what the traditional culture of mountain people is not only a problem in Daghestan, it is a microcosm of the ethnic problems in the ex-USSR republics, while mountain villages in Switzerland, Spain, France have suffered depopulation due to unemployment and the resulting flight to the cities. In Daghestan, with its variety of ethnic groups, two thirds of the total population live in over 700 mountain villages, yet the great liberating changes — still sweeping ex-USSR republics have hardly reached there.

Daghestan societies are diverse, yet akin, from village to village, mountain to plains, the north eastern Caucasus to the whole Caucasus. Every event and every occasion, whether natural or man-made seems to be celebrated with a customary accompaniment. Local feasts are linked with fertility, marriage, birth, male circumcision, a baby's first steps. All the peoples of Daghestan and the North Caucasus

By Feridon Jaimoukha

Maya Angelou makes feature film directorial debut

By Sarah Tippit
Reuters

LITERARY LEGEND Maya Angelou, whose tales of growing up poor and black in the deep South have inspired millions, never thought she would direct a film about a black family written by a white man from southern Georgia.

"But I never thought I wouldn't," she said of her feature film directing debut, "Down In The Delta," which opened in U.S. theatres on Christmas Day.

After all, the poet, singer, dancer, teacher and master of seven languages who is acclaimed as one of the great public speakers of the 20th Century said, she grew up reading white writers and is accustomed to reinterpreting their prose.

"If the writer resisted me then I resisted him. If the writer did not include the fact that I was a human being and mentioned in some of her work African Americans or Chinese people, if the writer put people down, then I put him or her down. (Take) Rudyard Kipling, with his racism and imperial stances. ... I still did love his poem. I just pretended he didn't write it," Angelou told Reuters in an interview.

"Down In The Delta" — written by 43-year-old advertising executive Myron Goble, who had no prior screenwriting experience and never lived in the black ghettos he wrote about — is very simply a strong human story, Angelou said.

Strong enough, it turned out, to convince her to detour from her writing so she could delve into film after a few stabs earlier at directing for stage and television and taking one cinematography class in Swedish.

"I wasn't excited about directing a film. I didn't think it would increase my understanding of life, only to find that of course it did. (The film) is a great human document, which could have taken place in Warsaw, Poland, or Warsaw, Montana." As for writer Goble, he said he was delighted that Angelou took an interest in his project.

"I had some time and a little bit of money that would allow me to write one screenplay to see if I could

explore that as a possible profession. I didn't know anything about," he said. "At the end of this I didn't want (to write) the story of my life that I would love and my mama would love, but who would know if it was any good?" So after reading a book about the African American migration out of the South to Chicago, Goble decided to write about the failed promise of prosperity in the North.

"I thought, 'Wouldn't it be interesting if a family in Chicago were relocated ... from an urban to a rural environment and were reacquainted with their relatives.' They're a blood family with ties that are strong but they don't necessarily know or understand each other. That's how the idea came about," Goble said.

In the film, the journey is taken by Loretta (played by Alfre Woodard), a drug-addicted single mother who lives with her mother, Rosa Lynn (Mary Alice), and two young children in an inner-city Chicago neighbourhood. Loretta has neglected her children and her son talks of getting "strapped" like his gun-toting classmates. Desperate to move her loved ones out of danger, Rosa Lynn pawns a prized family heirloom to send them to the family home in Mississippi to spend the summer with Uncle Earl (Al Freeman Jr.).

The story involves family reconciliation and regeneration and the soul-enhancing value of returning to roots. Wesley Snipes, who also served as the film's co-producer, appears in the film as Will, Earl's son.

Angelou said once she agreed to direct the film she got the actors she wanted "for peanut shells" and actual came in under her \$3.5 million budget. She wrapped herself around the project and filled in the cultural details — dialogue, experiences and attitudes common among African Americans — that Goble attempted to recreate but did not fully capture.

"It was set in the African American culture. There are many things he didn't know and couldn't know. ... I was able to bring what I know about that culture to bear," Angelou said.

"The thing that was so remarkable about (Goble) was that he loved his work and was not in love with it,

which means that his ego was not wrapped around it. He wanted a great film. If I said something he heard to be true, he said please do it. Now that's somebody to work with." For one thing, Angelou eliminated all profanity from the film. "I ask that we say what we mean to say, use our intelligence to say what we mean to say. Don't punctuate it with profanity. I do want to show that you really can use English to make yourself understood," Goble said he agreed with all of Angelou's changes. "When I finished this project I set two conditions for myself. One was remember you're white. The other was there are a lot of humorous moments in the picture," he said.

"It does reflect somebody who grew up in the TV sitcom era, so be aware of that as well. Dr. Angelou is someone who filled in with a knowledge that I don't have and at the same time much more subtle in her storytelling. ... This was a journey of illumination for myself and Dr. Angelou." Angelou's own childhood journey, which profoundly influences much of her work, took her from St. Louis to rural Stamps, Arkansas, where she was raised by her grandmother. As a child she was raped by her mother's boyfriend. After she testified against him, he was beaten to death.

"I was 7-1/2 and my 7-1/2 year-old logic deduced that my voice had killed him. So I stopped speaking for almost six years," she said. Her grandmother gave the mute child poetry to read, telling her: "Sister, Mama loves to see you read that poetry. You know what poetry will do for you? It will put stardust in your backbone." "I memorised the poetry," said Angelou, now 70, who believes age has taught her courage.

"There are two themes in all my work. I mean to say we must encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated. It may be necessary to encounter the defeats so one can find out just who he or she is. That is one (theme) and the other is that human beings are more alike than unlike," she said.

"And I was thinking about the journey in the film. Journey back to the roots. Journey to the heart. We're all on journeys."

If pain persists, take two

By Jean-Claude Elias

THE VERSATILITY of PCs has become a burden as much as it is a blessing. The number of tasks these machines can perform combined with the varied nature of these tasks amazes some and drives others to despair. Being able to do "traditional" work like word processing while at the same time downloading multimedia files from Internet, listening to an audio CD, printing out your kid's school report, and scanning the photos you took in Wadi Rum last weekend, is a very attractive prospect. But how can this be done safely, without causing the computer to crash or breaking your neck?

There are two sides to the question. The first is the technical possibility of carrying out simultaneously several, very different tasks. The second is how practical it is for one person to work like an octopus on one machine.

Theoretically, it is possible to set a PC in such a way that it lets you accomplish all these various jobs. Each system, naturally, has its own limits, but they are rarely reached. The technical difficulty is rather in the tuning of the system. Indeed, setting up a PC in a complex technical environment is a delicate undertaking.

Typically, adjusting the Windows operating system and all the application programmes and software drivers that work with it requires skill and experience. If your PC has a sophisticated sound card, a voice-modem, a shock-interactive joystick, a SCSI recordable CD-ROM drive, a document

chip talk



scanner, a removable hard disk drive, a dedicated audio recording card, a network adapter, a high-end colour ink-jet printer — I'll stop there — chances are that you won't be able to adjust all components to work in harmony from the very start.

Let's assume however that you managed to reach that stage. Your system will perform smoothly until the next change in hardware or software. The balance will be so fragile that any modification could upset it. Even replacing an apparently innocent mouse is a risk. Not to mention the virus factor.

The second aspect is more obvious. Personal computers may be polyvalent but our own polyvalence has physical, human limits. We have only a pair of eyes and a pair of hands. Moreover, controlling several operations with one screen, one keyboard and one mouse can be a real challenge.

The solution? Using more than one machine. Now that the price of the hardware has fallen to incredible lows, acquiring two (not to say three ...) PCs makes perfect sense. Even from the financial point of view. In a complex setup like the one described above, where large numbers of additional equipment (peripherals) and programmes are used, the price of a second PC becomes very acceptable compared to the total amount invested. Distributing the workload between two computers will make them perform in a more reliable manner.

Increased speed and performance will come only as fringe benefits. Monitoring the various tasks will be infinitely easier for the operator. Most businesses have understood the situation. Now it's time for home users to take a step in the right direction.

Central Bank
gap in '9

Figure 1. The effect of the concentration of the *Agrobacterium* suspension on the transformation efficiency of *Agrobacterium* strains. The number of transformed cells was determined by the number of colonies on the selective medium. The results are the mean \pm SD of three independent experiments. The number of transformed cells was determined by the number of colonies on the selective medium. The results are the mean \pm SD of three independent experiments.

Sampras withdraws from Australian Open

PERTH (AFP) — World number one men's tennis player Pete Sampras has withdrawn from the Australian Open later this month, tournament director Paul McNamee said here Saturday.

Sampras had cited "physical and mental fatigue" and needed a rest after a heavy programme, McNamee said.

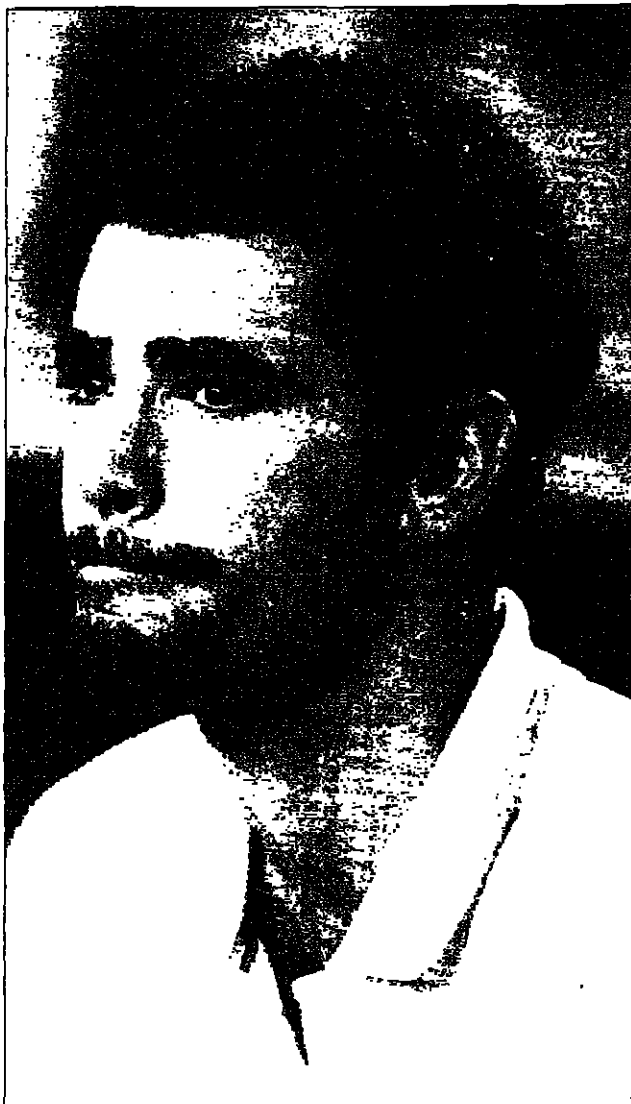
He said the withdrawal from the event starting January 18, advised by Sampras' agent late Saturday, was disappointing, but the field remained very strong.

"He obviously had a very long end of the year, he played seven weeks in a row in Europe, which is the first time he had done that in his career, obviously with the aim of finishing No. 1 in the world," McNamee said.

"He is pretty worn out and needs to take a rest. From an Australian Open perspective, it is disappointing."

"It was a very big decision for Pete. It will be the first Grand Slam he will have missed in five years. He also misses the chance at the Australian Open of equalling Australian Roy Emerson's record 12 Grand Slam singles victories."

"It also opens up the race for No. 1 position in the world."



Pete Sampras

Mallorca aim to continue surprise run

MADRID (AFP) — Surprise Spanish league leaders Real Mallorca aim to reignite their title challenge after the holiday break when they play away to bottom club Extremadura on Sunday.

The island team resume the season with a four-point advantage over nearest challengers Celta Vigo and Valencia, with the big names of Spanish football — Real Madrid and Barcelona — left in their wake.

"It is not a match we are going to take lightly, even though Extremadura are bottom the standings," said Mallorca coach Hector Cuper. "They are a difficult team to break down, particularly at home."

Cuper must, however, be concerned by his team's inability to find the net. Despite topping the table they have scored only 15 times in 16 matches — far fewer than most of their rivals. Goalkeeper Carlos Roa, however, has conceded only six goals.

Mallorca, on top of the standings for the first time in 35 years, are seven points clear of both Real Madrid and Barca.

"We are at the top on merit, not just because some of the big clubs have had some bad moments and not because we are lucky," said a defiant Cuper.

Chasing duo Celta Vigo and Valencia have home games this weekend, with Valencia taking on Real Sociedad on Saturday night and Vigo playing fifth-placed Oviedo on Sunday afternoon.

Barcelona, whose Dutch coach Louis van Gaal is still holding onto his job despite fans' demands he be removed, are at home to struggling promoted side Alaves, for whom new Italian international signing Nicola Bertoli will not be available.

Real Madrid, meanwhile, are at home to relegation strugglers Tenerife, who are looking for improved results under new coach Carlos Aizman.

Germans leads race

MARIBOR, Slovenia (AFP) — Hilde Gerg edged out compatriot Martina Ertl as German racers finished 1-2 in Saturday's fog-plagued World Cup women's Super G race here.

Olympic slalom champion Gerg, who won a downhill event at Veysonnaz, Switzerland, a week before Christmas, clocked 1min 30.17sec to finish 0.13 seconds in front of Ertl.

Michaela Dorfmeister of Austria was third at 0:29, followed by compatriot Christiane Mitterwallner at 0:38. Then came Corinne Rey-Bellet of Switzerland and Pernilla Wiberg of Sweden.

Overall World Cup leader Alexandra Meissnitzer of Austria finished back in ninth place as 23-year-old Gerg recorded the eighth World Cup victory of her career.

Ertl, the Olympic combined silver medalist, also finished second, behind Meissnitzer, in the last women's Super G at Val d'Isere, France, last month.

Early morning fog continued a run of weather problems that have plagued World Cup events at the Slovenian resort and briefly delayed matters on Saturday.

The first race in World Cup history scheduled for New Year's Day was postponed due to heavy fog when the Super G — originally scheduled for Friday — was delayed three times before organizers rescheduled it for Saturday.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Hong Kong racing turnover hit again

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong's economic difficulties have badly hit punters who cut back on wagers on New Year Day races. There was a 13 per cent slump in turnover in the races on Friday — normally a bonanza event for the Hong Kong Jockey Club. The total of 1.256 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$162 million) was down from \$1.45 billion a year ago, a spokesman said.

More than a million of Hong Kong's 6.4 million population are considered regular gamblers, making the jockey club a key part of the economy.

"The whole family have been great," she said. "They kept me humble. They didn't tell me I was great whenever I won a tournament or tell me I was going to be number one. They were just normal."

"Having two sisters helped a lot. Both of them told me 'You can't leave school... that's ridiculous' and stuff like that."

"I loved school and I never wanted to stop studying. I'm so pleased with the way things turned out."

Davenport's new draconian training schedules as she set about exchanging weight for power, paid rich dividends.

She was a semi-finalist at both the Australian Open and Roland Garros, and a quarter-finalist at Wimbledon and ended the season as a finalist at the WTA Championships in New York.

The year was marked by the battle between the rising teenage brigade and the established stars.

With former world No. 1 Steffi Graf unable to compete for much of the year because of injuries, the new wave, headed by Hingis, Russia's pin-up Anna Kournikova and American sisters Venus and Serena Williams moved in to take over.

Experienced campaigners such as Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic, Spaniards Arantxa Sanchez Vicario and Conchita Martinez, and American Monica Seles,

Hingis loses as slimmer Davenport rises to the top

PARIS (AFP) — Martina Hingis won the first and last major titles of 1998 — but in between she lost her World No. 1 ranking to new-look American Lindsay Davenport.

The 6ft 3in (1m89) Davenport, who lost 35 pounds (16 kilos) in 1998 in a concerted effort to improve her stamina and mobility, ended an 80-week reign by the Swiss teenager at Filderstadt in October — one month after capturing her first Grand Slam singles title at the United States Open.

The popular 22-year-old American, who didn't drop a set at Flushing Meadow, overpowered Hingis 6-3, 7-5 in the final to become the first American-born woman to win the home Grand Slam title since Chris Evert in 1982.

And, with refreshing simplicity after her triumph, she thanked her

were not ready to move over, however.

Hingis got off to a flying start when she beat the 1994 Wimbledon champion Martinez in straight-sets in the final of the Australian Open. But thereafter she lost her way.

Meanwhile the 'old guard' had the French Open final all to themselves.

Sanchez Vicario, 26, beat three-times champion Seles in an emotional three-set final — and after lifting the trophy promptly apologised for her victory.

"I'm sorry I had to beat you," she told the 24-year-old Seles after notching up her third win in the event.

"All of the players are sorry for what has happened to you and we all congratulate you on what you have managed to achieve in these difficult



Lindsay Davenport



Martina Hingis

parents for keeping her normal and insisted they had been right to insist she graduate before turning professional.

"The whole family have been great," she said. "They kept me humble. They didn't tell me I was great whenever I won a tournament or tell me I was going to be number one. They were just normal."

"Having two sisters helped a lot. Both of them told me 'You can't leave school... that's ridiculous' and stuff like that."

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times. You are a great champion."

She was referring to the death the previous month of Seles' father and coach, Karolj Seles, and to her opponent's remarkable run despite lack of match practice. At Wimbledon two 29-year-olds met for the title. Jana Novotna made it 'third-



Arantxa Sanchez Vicario

time lucky' when she beat another experienced campaigner Nathalie Tauziat in straight-sets for the title she had come so close to winning in 1993 and 1997.

This time the stylish Czech made no mistakes and outplayed the canny French player who was bidding to become the first French winner of the tournament since the legendary Suzanne Lenglen won her sixth title back in 1925.

Novotna's 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) win received an emotional standing ovation from the 14,000 fans packed around the centre-court.

In contrast to Wimbledon, the final of the Grand Slam Cup in October was an all-teenage affair — Venus Williams eventually defeating Switzerland's Patty Schnyder 6-2, 3-6, 6-2. It was the American's third title of the season. The big-hitting Williams, who had

celebrated her 18th birthday four months earlier, and who has never been short on proclaiming her talent, continued to predict that before the year 2000 she and her younger sister Serena would be facing each other in most major finals.

They would also be battling it out for the world number-one ranking.

Unfortunately her results in the major events through the season remained relatively mediocre although she climbed to fifth in the rankings.

She was stopped in the quarter-finals at the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon, and she went out to Davenport in the semi-finals at the United States Open.

Williams withdrew from the WTA Championships in New York because of a chronic knee injury and her withdrawal left the door open for Graf.

The former world number-one, who had seriously considered retirement during a season of injury stoppages, staged an impressive return in November after a wrist injury.

And once she was able to return to sustained competition she quickly showed that she is still a force to be reckoned with.

Graf defied the pundits, who claimed her often 'one-dimensional' forehand tennis was outdated, by sweeping to unexpected victories in Leipzig and Philadelphia.

It swelled the number of tournaments the 29-year-old German player has won to 106.

Graf, who reigned as world number-one for a record 377 weeks before injury forced an extended lay-off, also posted impressive victories over most of the world's top-ranked players in her late season spurt.

It was enough to suggest that she will add to her 21 Grand Slam singles titles in 1999.

Spain, led by Sanchez Vicario and Martinez, scored their fifth Fed Cup victory in September when they beat Switzerland 3-2 in Geneva.

Hingis won both of her singles but Schnyder lost both of hers and the Spaniards clinched their triumph with a one-sided win in the doubles.

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NBA players to make final proposal

NEW YORK (AFP) — After rejecting what NBA Commissioner David Stern termed the league's "final offer", the players are formulating their own "final" proposal in an effort to save the basketball season.

"I called David Stern and requested an opportunity to present it (the proposal) to the owners' labour committee as soon as they're available," said Players association executive director Billy Hunter.

NBA executive vice-president and chief legal officer Jeffrey Mishkin issued a statement Thursday regarding the status of collective bargaining negotiations.

"We have been told by the union that we can expect to receive its final proposal shortly. That proposal will be forwarded to the Labor Relations Committee and we will inform the union of the Committee's response."

"We have assured the union that, if no further meetings between the negotiating committees are scheduled prior to January 7, the union's final proposal will be put before the Board of Governors when it votes on that day."

Stern sent the owners' final 20-page proposal directly to more than 400 NBA players on Wednesday, urging a vote by the rank and file on the offer before the owners are expected to vote to cancel the season next Thursday.

Such a move would be unprecedented in North American professional sports.

The NBA never had lost games to a work stoppage until this year but their first one could be the most epic in North American sports history.

Baseball owners voted to cancel the 1994 World Series in a labor dispute under which ownership changes to work conditions prompted a strike with the season two-thirds over.

In 1982, American football teams lost seven games each to a players' strike, but an agreement was reached. A shortened schedule was completed and an expanded playoff system was installed, preserving the season.

France sweep aside Zimbabwe in Hopman Cup

PERTH (AFP) — France swept in to Group A of the A\$900,000 (\$550,620) Hopman Cup tennis mixed teams tournament here Saturday when they comfortably defeated Zimbabwe 2-1 in a play-off clash at Burswood Dome.

Guillaume Raoux, ranked 53rd in the world, crushed Wayne Black (95th) 6-1, 6-3 in straight sets in the men's singles after Sandrine Testud, who is ranked 14th, had given France a flying start by brushing aside the 44th-ranked Cara Black, Wayne Black's sister, in the women's singles.

Testud won 4-6, 6-1, 6-2. In the dead mixed doubles, the Zimbabwe pair gained some consolation with a straight sets win, 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5).

It was the first time Testud, 26, and 28-year-old Raoux had played together.

Testud said she was pleased she had arrived in Perth early to practise and to acclimatise to the hot weather.

"That, of course, was my first match of the year, and I have not played much tennis in the past two months because I had a long break," she said.

"I knew I would feel better as I went along. I am very happy to be here and for us to have qualified for the tournament," she said.

"I struggled a bit in the opening set, but I played a bit better in the next two sets."

"It is always good to have the chance to play a qualifying match."

She was encouraged by the success of the Slovak Republic in the previous year's tournament. They also had to win a pre-tournament play-off to reach the last eight — and Karina Habsudova and Karol Kucera went on to snatch the top prize when they beat French pair Mary Pierce and Cedric Pioline in the final.

"But it is not going to be easy here," Testud said. "I think everybody has a chance to win."

Raoux, who now lives in Florida, said he had had a concentrated workout in Noumea immediately before coming here.

France's win means they qualify for Group A of the tournament.

They will come up against top-seeded Spanish pair Carlos Moya and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario Monday, Australians Mark Philippoussis and Jelena Dokic on Wednesday and South Africans Wayne Ferreira and Amanda Coetzer on Thursday.

The Spaniards will be an especially big challenge. Moya is ranked number five, while Sanchez Vicario is ranked fourth.

France have never won the Hopman Cup, and last year's appearance in the showdown was their best effort in the competition.

Double alert for round the world yacht race

AUCKLAND (AFP) — A solo round the world yacht race was in chaos Saturday after the leader had to be towed to safety following a mayday alert and a top woman yachtsman collided with a whale.

Overall leader Mike Golding of England was battling to stay in the Alone Around race after he sent out a mayday alert Friday night off Cape Reinga in northern New Zealand.

The latest victim was French yachtsman star Isabelle Autissier, whose yacht PRB hit a whale in the Tasman Sea. Organisers said Autissier was safe but her vessel had sustained rudder damage.

Golding's yacht Team Group 4 is now at Tom Bowling Bay near the cape while his support crew assesses damage to the hull and swing keel of the 18 metre (60 foot) vessel.

Team Group 4 designer Pascal Conq flew to the yacht Saturday hoping to make it safe for the 340 kilometre (210 miles) run to the finishing line in Auckland.

The team were to make a statement on Sunday on whether they would stay in the race.

The second leg of the race was won by Giovanni Soldini of Italy. Golding had a two day, 17 hour over all lead over Soldini before his disaster.

The second leg started in Cape Town on December 5 and Soldini finished at 4:24 a.m. on Saturday (1524 GMT Friday). The Italian covered the 6,884 miles to Auckland in 27 days, 5hrs, 24min and 52sec.

Marc Thiercelin of France overtook Autissier to go



Englishman Mike Golding, the overall leader of the solo round the world yacht race, stands on his boat after sending out a Mayday distress call because of a collision off New Zealand. Around Alone race organisers said he "struck an object" while Radio New Zealand (RNZ) said he hit a reef off Cape Reinga (AFP photo)

third. Thiercelin and Autissier were expected in Auckland on Sunday.

Race headquarters said Autissier was not in danger as the weather was fine.

In this race four years ago she had to abandon her yacht in the Tasman Sea and was lifted off by naval helicopter. This time she was forced to make a Boxing Day pit stop in Tasmania to repair her mainsail track.

Golding survived the dangerous Southern Ocean and was last week caught up in the deadly storm which claimed six lives in the Sydney-to-Hobart yacht race.

But when he sounded the alert off Cape Reinga the weather was calm and clear. Race organisers say Golding struck something just after sunset on Friday

night. Nine minutes later he issued a Mayday distress call, saying he was taking on water, and was helped by a nearby fishing boat.

Soldini was sure that Golding would stay in the race, which leaves again for Punta del Este in Uruguay on February 6. "Mike is healthy and Group 4 has a great team, they will fix the boat," he said.

The Italian said he had sensed danger as he approached Cape Reinga.

"You feel danger up there," he told a press conference. "You are very tired. When I passed North Cape I wrote a message to Isabelle and told her to be careful."

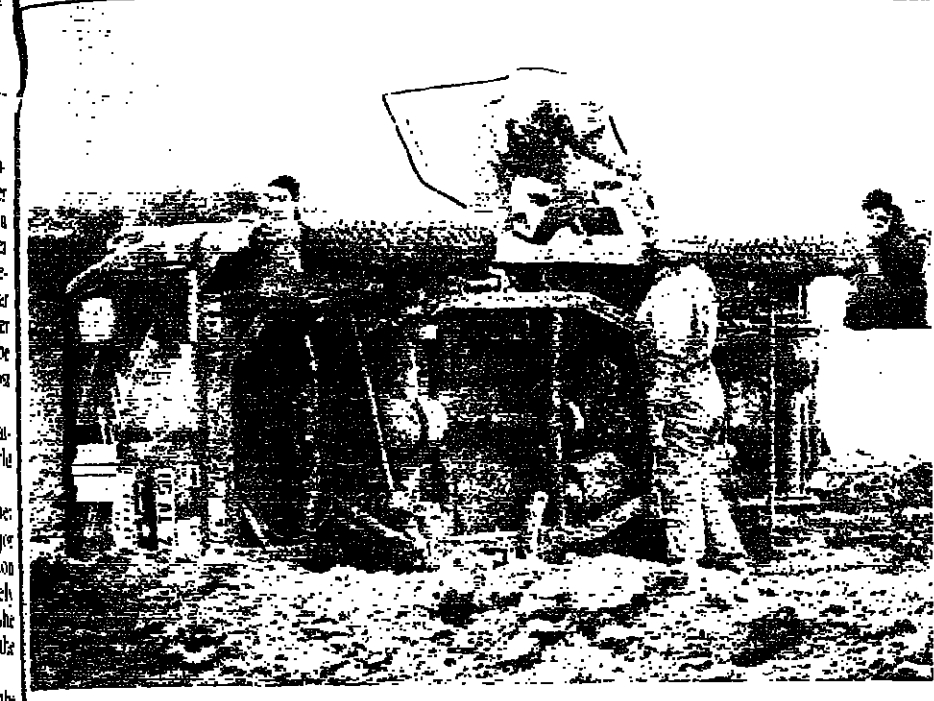
The race, which began in Charleston, South Carolina, on September 26, is going

ahead as Australia still seeks to get over the tragedy of the six dead from the Sydney-Hobart race.

A special memorial service was held in Tasmania on Friday and soul-searching over the future of the race continued Saturday.

The Australian newspaper said in an editorial: "The cost of the 1998 Sydney to Hobart race was too high: six men lost at sea. For their families, friends and the wider community it is a terrible price to pay for a race we all expect to be fun."

"But the urge that sends men and women to sea is no different to that which sends others to the top of mountains or into space or even into the business world to take the risk that will make or break them," it said.



Italians Gianni Lamia Lora and Roberto di Persio get out of their Nissan Patrol after their accident during the first stage of the 21st edition of the Dakar Rally near Granada. Hundred and seventy cars, motorbikes and trucks are taking part in the race which is scheduled to finish 17 January in Dakar, Senegal. Heavy rain forced the cancellation of the first official stage of the rally, with a 5km special stage organised instead, officials said (AFP photo)

Scud says he will clean up his act in 1999

SYDNEY (AP) — Australian tennis player Mark Philippoussis says he is ready to replace conflicts that have marred his tennis career with new confidence gained by working with former Wimbledon champion Pete Cash.

Philippoussis clashed with Davis Cup bosses Tony Roche and John Newcombe, and also threatened to pull out of Wimbledon as his form slumped last year. But words of encouragement by Cash turned his year around and culminated in him competing the U.S. Open final with fellow Australian Pat Rafter.

"Last year was definitely a roller-coaster ride, but I finished off OK," Philippoussis said Saturday. "It's great that Cash came on the scene, and that's made me more positive. I'm enjoying myself a lot more than I had been, I'm enjoying the challenge a lot more, and hopefully it's going to be a good year."

The 22-year-old has no regrets about his clashes with authority, as well as controversial decisions, including declining to play some Davis Cup matches, as he has made throughout his career.

"I make decisions, right or wrong," he said. "That's part of learning, that's part of growing up."

After a period at his Florida base and a spell of snowboarding in Austria, his new season gets underway at the Hopman Cup. Philippoussis is partnering world number one junior Jelena Dokic in the international team competition.

"I'm working extremely hard and my fitness level feels the best it's been," said Philippoussis. "He knows how I feel, which is important, and it's great having someone there you can talk to."

On Saturday, France claimed the remaining place in the Hopman Cup draw when they defeated Zimbabwe 2-1 in a qualifying round. Sandrine Testud rallied to



Mark Philippoussis

Wimbledon last year, and sent him some words of encouragement. They soon began working together with spectacular results.

"He's been there. He's been through so many things that I've been going through too," said Philippoussis. "He knows how I feel, which is important, and it's great having someone there you can talk to."

On Saturday, France claimed the remaining place in the Hopman Cup draw when they defeated Zimbabwe 2-1 in a qualifying round. Sandrine Testud rallied to

overcome former World junior No. 1 Cara Black 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, and Guillaume Raoux clinched the match with a 6-1, 6-3 win over Wayne Black. In the mixed doubles, Zimbabwe beat France 7-6 (7-4), 7-6 (7-5).

Teams are split into two groups in the round-robin competition. Group A consists of South Africa, Australia, Spain and France. Group B is made up of the United States, Switzerland, Sweden and the Slovak Republic.

Australia plays South Africa to open the tournament on Sunday.

Korda vows to play on after drugs scandal

DOHA (AFP) — Czech tennis star Petr Korda vowed here on Friday to continue playing for another two years, scotching reports that he could quit following a drugs scandal.

The reigning Australian Open champion, who failed a test for the anabolic steroid nandrolone at Wimbledon last year, claimed: "I have been proved innocent by the International Tennis Federation (ITF) and the decision will be announced shortly."

"I'll prove myself as a player here at Doha. I am determined to climb back up the world rankings. I intend to quit in around two years."

It was earlier reported that Korda, ranked 13th in the world and one of the stars of the ATP Tour event here starting on Monday, was on the brink of retirement after his failed drugs test in July.

The 30-year-old Czech,



Petr Korda

whose top ranking of seventh in the world came in 1992, was forced by the ITF to forfeit the \$94,529

he won as a Wimbledon quarter-finalist.

But the ITF ruled out a ban, saying it accepted he

could have been unaware of being given the steroid in an injection following an injury.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMARA KIRCH
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A LONG SHOT COMES THROUGH

North-South vulnerable, South deals:

NORTH
♠ A K
♥ J 5 3
♦ A 8 7
♣ 9 8 4 3

WEST
♠ Q 8 6 4 3
♥ K Q 7
♦ 10 3
♣ Q 10 8

EAST
♠ J 10 9 2
♥ 7 10 4
♦ 9 6
♣ K J 7 2

SOUTH
♠ 7 5
♥ A 9 6 2
♦ K Q J 5 4 2
♣ A

The bidding:

NORTH WEST NORTH EAST
1: Pass 2: Pass
2: Pass 3: Pass
4: Pass 4NT Pass
5: Pass 6: Pass

Opening lead: Four of ♠

If you are in a contract that does not have much chance, do everything in your power to get home. South's desperate maneuvers on this deal are worth emulating.

South's cue-bid of four clubs was something of a stretch. Who could blame North, looking at a hand

with three prime cards, support for partner's suit and a ruffing value, for pushing on to slam?

West led a spade, and declarer was not thrilled with the prospect of avoiding two heart losers. The only possibility was to maneuver an endplay, and that would require a very specific distribution — West would have to have both heart honors or a doubleton K 10 or Q 10 of hearts, and no more than three clubs. In addition, trumps would have to be evenly divided.

Declarer won the spade lead in dummy, cleared the ace of clubs, cashed the king of diamonds, then crossed to the table with the ace of trumps. Fortunately, both defenders followed. A club was ruffed, and the remaining high spade provided the entry for a second club ruff. Now declarer exited with a low heart.

It was South's lucky day. West took the queen of hearts and was faced with a choice of ways to commit suicide. A spade would permit declarer to discard a heart from the table, cash the ace of hearts and then ruff a heart, setting up the 13th heart in hand thanks to the 3-split. A low heart would allow the jack to win and a heart ruff on the table would round out 12 tricks. Just another routine slam.

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Western teams start probe into Yemen rescue bid

SANAA (R) — American and British teams have begun investigations into Tuesday's rescue operation by Yemeni troops in which four hostages died and two were injured, a U.S. embassy spokesman said on Saturday.

"They [investigators] are working together with their appropriate Yemeni counterparts," the spokesman said, adding that the teams were receiving good cooperation.

An FBI team and British detectives arrived in Yemen on Friday to probe the rescue operation in which three Britons and an Australian died and two tourists, including an American, were injured.

The investigation teams arrived a day after Britain accused Yemen of lack of cooperation in providing a full account of Tuesday's raid.

One diplomat said the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation had sent about 10 agents to Sanaa, while the British team was made up of four detectives.

A Yemeni official said earlier that Australia's ambassador to neighbouring Saudi

Arabia was also expected to join the probe into the abduction and the storming of the kidnappers' hideout.

Britain and Yemen moved closer to a diplomatic row as London summoned the Yemeni ambassador for the second time in two days on Friday to express its dissatisfaction over not receiving a full account of the raid.

British Ministers have said London would be very concerned if it turned out its advice to seek a negotiated solution to the kidnapping had been ignored by Sanaa.

According to a Yemeni official quoted in Saturday's London Times newspaper, Yemeni security chiefs knew days before the 16 tourists were kidnapped that Islamic militants were planning to attack a British target.

However they failed to alert British diplomats who only learnt about the plot after the hostages were killed in the rescue bid.

Yemen has insisted its security forces had to go in because the kidnappers had started killing hostages. But some hostages have said they were used by the kidnappers

as human shields as Yemeni forces moved in.

Eight British tourists and an Australian flew into London on Friday after surviving the gun battle when troops moved in to free them.

An American woman who was among the survivors has also left Yemen, leaving behind another American who was wounded in the shoot-out, the U.S. embassy spokesman said.

A little-known guerrilla group calling itself the Aden Abyan Islamic Army claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and blamed Sanaa for the hostage deaths.

The government said the kidnappers were Islamic militants targeting American and British tourists and demanding freedom for a member of the Islamic Jihad group held by Yemeni security forces.

Dozens of tourists have been kidnapped in Yemen in recent years by tribesmen seeking handouts from the government, but in most cases foreigners have been treated well and released unharmed. Until Tuesday, no hostage had been killed.



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat joins a dancing group and dances the traditional debka dance in Gaza on Thursday. Palestinians throughout the West Bank and Gaza marked the 34th anniversary of the establishment of the Fateh movement (AP photo)

Palestinians rally to mark 34th anniversary of PLO's Fateh

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Some 4,000 Palestinians held a rally here Saturday to mark the 34th anniversary of the PLO's leading Fateh faction, founded by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Several leading Fateh officials spoke at the rally, including Zakaria Agha from the PLO's executive committee. Agha, speaking on behalf of Arafat, told the crowd Palestinian officials would continue to work to liberate

Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons.

Meanwhile roughly 100 Palestinians gathered for a peaceful rally in Bethlehem to mark the anniversary, witnesses said.

Arafat released a statement overnight Thursday to mark the anniversary and vowed the Palestinian National Authority was committed to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Major storm socks U.S. Midwest with heavy snow, gusting winds

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A massive winter storm arcing from the U.S. Gulf Coast to the upper Midwest grounded scores of New Year's flights, knocked out power to thousands and threatened to dump more than 1/3 metre of snow across the northern half of the region.

Highway officials warned motorists to stay off roads and airlines cancelled flights Saturday, hoping the storm would lift in time for the post-holiday traffic peak Sunday.

The storm was blamed for at least seven deaths. Six of them — two in Arkansas, two in Nebraska and two in Missouri — occurred in traffic accidents.

The seventh, in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, was that of a quadriplegic college student who froze to death after his electric wheelchair became stuck in the snow early Friday on his way home from a New Year's Eve party.

About 15 centimetres of snow covered St. Louis by Friday night, along with areas of central and south-

eastern Illinois and central Iowa.

More than three dozen flights were cancelled Friday at Lambert Airport in St. Louis and dozens of others were delayed, some for three hours or more. Trans World Airlines cancelled all of its Saturday morning flights into and out of the airport — about 140 total.

In Chicago, walls of sandbags were placed along Lakeshore Drive to prevent waves from Lake Michigan from flooding the busy road. O'Hare and Midway airports assem-

bled than 100 pieces of snow removal equipment, along with hundreds of cots for travellers who may be stranded by the storm.

Deputies in Texas said tornadoes injured at least seven people and destroyed three mobile homes east of Huntsville. None of the injuries were life-threatening, said hospital spokeswoman Jill Baine.

Over the state line in Arkansas, freezing rain toppled power lines and cut service to more than 100,000 utility customers.

NEWS IN BRIEF

2,000 killed in year of Kurd-Turkish violence

ANKARA (AFP) — The Turkish army killed 1,843 Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) rebels during 1998 in operations in the east and south-east of the country, according to the official toll released Saturday. The figures show 311 members of the security forces died in the fighting. The PKK launched its armed campaign for a Kurdish homeland in south-eastern Turkey in 1984. The violence has claimed 31,000 lives.

Shopkeeper finds fox in shop after holiday

NAPLES (AP) — It wasn't exactly a fox in the henhouse, but it came close. A Naples shopkeeper reopening after the New Year's holiday found a fox in his clothing store in the heart of this southern city's bustling downtown. Annamaria Pacelli managed to corner the fox in the bathroom, then call police, who captured the animal and turned it over to a wildlife rescue group, news reports said. The uproar roused the entire neighbourhood and sent several superstitious neighbours scurrying off for lottery tickets with the numbers 2 and 8, which signify "fox" and "surprise" in a popular Neapolitan book on the numerical interpretation of dreams.

KLM flight forced to return to Istanbul airport

ISTANBUL (AP) — A KLM Royal Dutch Airlines plane bound for Amsterdam had to make an emergency landing at the Istanbul airport Saturday after its tail hit the runway during takeoff, reports said. None of 124 the passengers or crew aboard the Boeing 737-400 were hurt, the Anadolu news agency reported. The agency said the plane made a steeper-than-usual takeoff and the tail hit the ground. The plane took off for Amsterdam a couple of hours later after airport technical crews determined it has suffered no serious damage.

Taleban: Ben Laden too poor to run bases

KABUL (R) — A minister in Afghanistan's Taleban Islamic government said on Saturday that Saudi Arabian dissident Osama Ben Laden, living in exile in Afghanistan, was now too poor to run alleged military bases for terrorists. "Osama's capital in overseas banks is frozen and he does not have the capability to build military bases, run religious schools or support anyone in the field of economy or education," Taleban Information and Culture Minister Amir Khan Mutaqi told reporters. Ben Laden, reputed to be a millionaire, is wanted by the United States for allegedly being the mastermind behind the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in August that killed at least 263 people. Ben Laden denies responsibility for the bombings. The United States in November offered \$5.0 million reward for information leading to his arrest and conviction.

Five children killed in hit and run accident

CAIRO (AP) — A mini-bus killed five school children in a hit and run accident in southern Egypt on Saturday, police said. One child survived the accident and is in hospital with a broken leg and broken arms. Police are searching for the driver of the bus, which was carrying no passengers, officials said. The accident happened as the children, all 13, were walking to school on the side of the north-south highway through Sohag province, 340 kilometers south of Cairo, said police officials. The vehicle struck the children from behind and sent them flying, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

German tourists stranded in Turkey

ANTALYA (R) — Around 300 German tourists were stranded in the southern Turkish resort of Antalya on Saturday because of a payment row between travel companies, airport officials said. They said the tourists, who were due to fly back to Duesseldorf on Saturday, were being put up at a nearby hotel while the airline Air Alfa and tour operator TransAtlas tried to resolve their disagreement.

Russian woman hides dead baby in freezer

MOSCOW (AP) — Police found a baby's corpse in its mother's freezer in northern Russia, the Interfax news agency reported Saturday. The woman, now 38, had hidden her pregnancy and delivered the baby at home. It was not clear whether the child was stillborn or was killed. Interfax said, citing a prosecutor in Pechora, about 1450 kilometers northeast of Moscow. The woman had kept the corpse in her apartment for more than a year, the prosecutor said. The report did not say whether the woman would face any charges.

Saleh receives Misha'al

SANAA (AFP) — Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh met here Saturday with the head of the political office of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), the official SABA news agency said.

Saleh and Khaled Misha'al discussed "developments on the Palestinian question in light of the recent obstacles to the peace process because of Israel's intransigence," Saba said.

Saleh expressed Yemen's "support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to recover their legitimate rights and establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital," it said.

Hamas last month reaffirmed its commitment to armed struggle against Israel despite October's Wye River land-for-security agreement between the Jewish state and the Palestinians.

Thousands preparing for euro's trading debut

(Continued from page 1)

In Belgium, only a tiny proportion of bank accounts will be immediately converted from francs to euros. The Belgian Association of Banks said requests to switch to euros represented only 0.16 per cent of the country's bank accounts at the last count. Countries around the world welcomed the

launch of Europe's single currency.

Taiwan reportedly switched up to \$20 billion of its vast reserves into the new currency, while Japan's Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi saw the euro as a rival to the dollar and yen. The United States also officially welcomed the launch, though analysts differ on whether the euro will ultimately help or hinder U.S. economic growth.

EU Monetary Affairs Commissioner Yves Thibault de Silguy warned Saturday that "the euro will not be the miracle solution" for Europe's economy and unemployment problems.

"There is still a lot to do," he said in an interview with Italian daily Il Sole 24 Ore, citing as an example the "structural reforms required by economic globalisation." The European press

hailed the launch of the single currency.

In Spain, the financial daily Expansion called on European leaders to make the single currency a prelude to political union and a more democratic Europe.

The German media commented that the "hardest part remains to be done" as European citizens must "now bring the euro to life," and "everything now depends on the

ability to create enough jobs on the joint European market."

The Saudi press said the euro should be viewed jealously by Arabs who are unable to unify themselves.

And in Denmark, which has opted out of the single currency because of a lack of public support, Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen said he would like to see his country join the euro.

Hizbollah warns Israel against Lebanon strike

(Continued from page 1)

"The lives of people of the south should not become votes to stuff the ballot boxes."

We want to remind Netanyahu that Lebanon was the graveyard of many Israeli governments and that betting on Lebanon to win the elections will backfire," The Shi'ite Muslim cleric was referring to the 17-day blitz launched by former Prime Minister Shimon Peres against Lebanon a few weeks before the 1996 election.

The "Grapes of Wrath" operation resulted in the deaths of 200 people, mainly civilians, and Peres lost his bid for reelection after Israeli Arabs declined to vote for him in a close-run race.

South Lebanon is the last active Arab-Israeli battle front. Twenty-one Israeli soldiers were killed there in 1998, prompting the Jewish state to review its presence in area.

The Jewish state has controlled parts of the south for 20 years, including a 15-kilometre deep occupation zone it carved out in 1985 with the aim of protecting its northern borders from potential guerrilla attacks.

Nasrallah said such threats would not spare the Jewish state or halt Hizbollah's war of attrition against the occupation.

"Words won't do them any good, they must take action. They must withdraw unconditionally and if they really want to avoid the Katyushas, they should not attack civilians," he said.

"We only launch the Katyushas at occupied northern Palestine to revive the understanding which protects civilians." Under the "April Understanding" ceasefire deal which ended the 1996 bombardment, the guerrillas and the Israeli army are barred from striking civilian targets, but not military ones.

Despite the agreement, the bloody conflict claimed 28 civilian lives last year.

Dozens of guerrillas, mostly from Hizbollah, were also

killed by Israel or its local proxy the South Lebanon Army (SLA) in 1998.

On Friday, Netanyahu warned Lebanon that it can expect tough reprisals if northern Israel comes under rocket attack again from Lebanese territory.

"We will not tolerate the firing of Katyusha rockets and will respond with attacks on targets within Lebanon," Netanyahu told Israeli army radio, in what was seen as a threat to launch air raids against Lebanese infrastructure.

Netanyahu's warning to Beirut came a day after his inner security cabinet rejected suggestions that Israel carry out a unilateral withdrawal from the "security zone" set up in southern Lebanon to prevent cross-border attacks.

In a statement issued Thursday after a meeting of the security cabinet to discuss the situation in southern Lebanon, the government said the "Lebanese government was responsible for everything

that happens inside Lebanon."

It also warned that there would be reprisals to any Katyusha fire and said an effort would be made to avoid civilian casualties.

In the most recent Katyusha attack, guerrillas of the Shiite Muslim Hizbollah rained volleys of rockets on northern Israel on Dec. 23, injuring 13 Israelis.

The Katyushas were fired in retaliation at a botched Israeli air raid on Hizbollah a day earlier which left a Lebanese woman and six of her children dead. The raid itself was part of a series of tit-for-tat attacks.

After the rockets struck northern Israel, Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani called for the bombardment of power stations supplying electricity to the Lebanese capital.

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, architect of Israel's 1982 invasion of its northern neighbour, called for a massive warning strike followed by the start of a phased unilateral withdrawal, according to

the newspaper Yediot Aharanot.

Neither proposal was accepted by Netanyahu amid concern they could lead to a dangerous escalation of tensions.

Netanyahu has also cast aside calls for a unilateral withdrawal.

"There cannot be a withdrawal until the conclusion of a security agreement with Beirut under which it would prevent attacks on Israel from Lebanon," he said.

Lebanon has refused to enter into such an agreement and has demanded an immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in line with 20-year-old U.N. Security Council Resolution 425.

Lebanon has also linked any agreement with Israel to a peace deal between the Jewish state and Syria, which is demanding an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed in 1981.

Tonnes of trash follow New Year's party

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — What could possibly follow the World's Biggest Party? The World's Biggest Cleanup, of course. Several thousand garbage workers began the New Year early Friday morning, scouring some 720 tonnes of trash from Rio's 60 kms of beaches, reported Globo TV News.

On world famous Copacabana beach, three million revelers danced to samba bands as welcomed in the New Year in what Rio officials traditionally claim is the world's largest outdoor party. More than 7,000 fireworks exploded, beer and champagne flowed freely. Much of the garbage consists of New Year's offerings for Iemanjá, the African goddess of the sea.

Year 2000 bug comes 12 months early

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Police at three Swedish airports Friday got a foretaste of the much-feared Year 2000 bug — their computers malfunctioned at the stroke of midnight, causing distress for passport-travellers.

The bug in police offices at airports that issue immediate, temporary passports' to last minute or forgetful travellers. The computers refused to acknowledge that 1999 had arrived and stubbornly refused to authorise the one-month documents. Apparently the fault was caused by the use of 99 in some programmes as a code to mean "end of run" or "end of file."

Unemployed elephants facing starvation

NEW DELHI (AP) — Jobless elephants in India are wondering where their next meal will come from. Some 100 elephants are starving in the northeastern state of Tripura after recent Supreme Court orders on felling trees in the jungles in the area. One of the elephants are facing difficulty to feed the elephants. Press Trust of India news agency reported Friday. One man plans to sell an elephant, but found no buyers. Elephants are widely used in the Northeast to haul timber from the steep terrain where mechanised vehicles cannot be used. The state government has asked the federal environment ministry to ask the court to reconsider the ban.

Shakespeare voted personality of the millennium

LONDON (AP) — William Shakespeare was voted personality of the millennium by BBC radio listeners, the 800th anniversary of his birth announced here on Friday.

The great English playwright and poet (1564-1616) beat wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill (1874-1965) and William Caxton (1422-91), who introduced the printing press to Britain. Naturalist Charles Darwin (1809-82) and mathematician physicist Isaac Newton (1642-1727) took fourth and fifth place in the vote by around 45,000 radio listeners.

Rock star Mick Jagger, Miss Piggy, puppet character from television's "The Muppet Show" and Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), the English civil war leader and Lord Protector of England also scored well.

Computer and stolen from top Mossad officer

TEL AVIV (AP) — Police in Israel are investigating the theft of a computer and a stolen passport from a top Mossad officer.

The officer, who is a senior intelligence official, was seen last week in a car with a stolen passport. The car was found in a parking lot in the city of Tel Aviv. The officer is a senior intelligence official and is a member of the Mossad. The car was found in a parking lot in the city of Tel Aviv. The officer is a senior intelligence official and is a member of the Mossad.

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EgyptAir jet make emergency landing after bird strike

CAIRO (AP) — A scheduled flight of an EgyptAir jet was forced to make an emergency landing in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, after a bird strike on Saturday.

The jet, en route to London, landed safely without further incident, officials said. The jet was then taken to a repair service. The jet was then taken to a repair service. The jet was then taken to a repair service.